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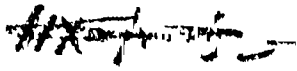
WYANDOTTÉ;

OR,

THE HUTTED KNOLL.

VOL. III.



WYANDOTTÉ;

OR,

THE HUTTED KNOLL.

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BY J. FENIMORE COOPER, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE PATHFINDER," "DEERSLAYER," "LAST OF THE MOHICANS," "PIONEERS," "PRAIRIE," ETC.

I venerate the Pilgrim's cause,
Yet for the red-man dare to plead;
We bow to Heaven's recorded laws,
He turns to nature for his creed.

SPRAGUE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE HUTTED KNOLL.

CHAPTER I.

His hand was stay'd—he knew not why;
'Twas a presence breathed around—
A pleading from the deep-blue sky,
And up from the teeming ground.
It told of the care that lavish'd had been
In sunshine and in dew—
Of the many things that had wrought a screen
When peril round it grew.

MRS. SEBA SMITH.

THE desertions gave not only the captain, but his great support and auxiliary, the sergeant, the gravest apprehensions. A disposition of that nature is always contagious, men abandoning a failing cause, much as rats are known to quit a sinking ship. It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that the distrust which accompanied the

unexpected appearance of the Tuscarora, became associated with this falling off in the loyalty of the garrison, in the minds of the two old soldiers.

"I do think, your honour," said Joyce, as they entered the court together, "that we may depend on O'Hearn, and Jamie, and Strides. The latter, as a matter of course, being a corporal, or sergeant, as he calls himself; and the two first, as men who have no ties but such as would be likely to keep them true to this family. But here is the corporal to speak for himself."

As this was said, Corporal Strides, as the sergeant persisted in terming Joel, on the ground that being but one step higher himself, the overseer could justly claim no rank of greater pretension, approached the captain, taking care to make the military salute which Joyce had never succeeded before in extracting from him, notwithstanding a hundred admonitions on the subject.

"This is a distressing affair, Captain Willoughby," observed Joel, in his most jesuitical manner; "and to me it is altogether onaccountable! It does seem to me ag'in natur', for a man to desart his own household and hum'" (Joel

meant *home*) "in the hour of trial. If a fellow-being wunt" (Anglicè, wont) "stand by his wife and children, he can hardly be expected to do any of his duties."

"Quite true, Strides," answered the confiding captain, "though these deserters are not altogether as bad as you represent, since, you will remember, they have carried their wives and children with them."

"I believe they have, sir—yes, that must be allowed to be true, and that it is, which to me seems the most extr'or'nary. The very men that a person would calcilate on the most, or the heads of families, have desarted, while them that remain behind are mostly single!"

"If we single men have no wives and children of our own to fight for, Strides," observed Joyce, with a little military stiffness, "we have the wife and children of Captain Willoughby; no man who wishes to sell his life dearly, need look for a better motive."

"Thank you, sergeant," the captain said, feelingly. "On *you* I can rely as on myself. So long as I have *you*, and Joel, here, and Mike and

the blacks, and the rest of the brave fellows who have stood by me thus far, I shall not despair. *We* can make good the house against ten times our own number. But it is time to look to the Indians."

"I was going to speak to the captain about Nick," put in Joel, who had listened to the eulogium on his own fidelity with some qualms of conscience. "I can't say I like the manner he has passed between the two parties; and that fellow has always seemed to me as if he owed the captain a mortal grudge; when an Injin *does* owe a grudge, he is pretty sartain to pay it, in full."

"This has passed over my mind, too, I will confess, Joel; yet Nick and I have been on reasonably good terms, when one comes to remember his character, on the one side, and the fact that I have commanded a frontier garrison, on the other. If I have had occasion to flog him a few times, I have also had occasion to give him more rum than has done him good, with now and then a dollar."

"There I think the captain miscalcilates," observed Joel, with a knowledge of human nature

that would have been creditable to him, had he practised on it himself. "No man is thankful for rum when the craving is off, sin' he knows he has been taking an inimy into his stomach; and as for the money, it was much the same as giving the liquor, seein' that it went for liquor as soon as he could trot down to the mill. A man will seek his revenge for rum, as soon as for anything else, when he gets to feel injuries uppermost. Besides, I s'pose the captain knows an injury will be remembered long a'ter a favour is forgotten."

"This may be true, Strides, and certainly I shall keep my eyes on the Indian. Can you mention any particular act, that excites your suspicion?"

"Don't the captain think Nick may have had suthin' to do with the desartions?—A dozen men would scarce desart all at once, as it might be, onless some one was at the bottom of it."

This was true enough, certainly, though Joel chose to keep out of view all his own machinations and arts on the subject. The captain was struck by the suggestion, and he determined to put his first intention in respect to Nick in

force immediately. Still, it was necessary to proceed with caution, the state of the Hut rendering a proper watch and a suitable prison difficult to be obtained. These circumstances were mentioned to the overseer, who led the way to the part of the buildings occupied by his own family; and, throwing open the doors, ostentatiously exhibited Phœbe and her children in their customary beds, at a moment when so many others had proved recreant. His professed object was to offer a small closet in his own rooms as a prison for Nick, remarking he must be an ingenious savage indeed, if he could escape the vigilance of as many watchful eyes as would then be on him.

"I believe you, Strides," said the captain, smiling as he walked away from the place; "if he can escape Phœbe and *her* children, the fellow must be made of quicksilver. Still, I have a better prison in view. I am glad to see this proof, however, of your own fidelity, by finding all your family in their beds; for those are not wanting who would have me suspect even *you*."

"Me!—Well, if the captain can't count on his own overseer, I should like to ask such persons on whom he *can* count? Madam Willoughby and the young ladies isn't more likely to remain true than I am myself, I should think. What in reason, or natur', or all lawful objects, could make *me*——"

Joel was about to run into that excess of vindication that is a little apt to mark guilt; but, the captain cut him short, by telling him it was unnecessary, recommending vigilance, and walking away in search of Nick.

The Indian was found standing beneath the arch of the gateway, upright, motionless, and patient. A lantern was kept burning here, the place being used as a sort of guard-house; and, by its light, it was easy to perceive the state of the still unhung leaf of the passage. This leaf, however, was propped in its place by strong timbers; and, on the whole, many persons would think it the most secure half of the gate. Captain Willoughby observed that the Indian was studying this arrangement when he entered the place himself. The circumstance caused him un-

easiness, and quickened his determination to secure the Indian.

"Well, Nick," he said, concealing his intention under an appearance of indifference, "you see our gates are well fastened, and steady hands and quick eyes will do the rest. It is getting late, and I wish to have you comfortably lodged before I lie down myself. Follow me, and I will show you to a place where you will be at your ease."

The Tuscarora understood the captain's object the instant he spoke of giving him comfortable lodgings, a bed being a thing that was virtually unknown to his habits. But, he raised no objections, quietly treading in the other's footsteps, until both were in the bedroom of the absent Mr. Woods. The apartments of the chaplain were above the library, and being in the part of the house that was fortified by the cliff, they had dormer windows that looked toward the forest. The height of these windows the captain thought would be a sufficient security against flight; and by setting Mike and one of the Plinies on the look-out, to relieve each other

at intervals of four hours, he thought the Tuscarora might be kept until the return of light. The hour when he most apprehended danger was that which just precedes the day, sleep then pressing the heaviest on the sentinel's eye-lids, and rest having refreshed the assailants.

"Here, Wyandotté, I intend you shall pass the night," said the captain, assuming as much courtesy of manner as if he were doing the honours of his house to an invited and honoured guest. "I know you despise a bed, but there are blankets, and by spreading them on the floor you can make your own arrangements."

Nick made a gesture of assent, looking cautiously around him, carefully avoiding every appearance of curiosity at the same time, more in pride of character, however, than in cunning. Nevertheless, he took in the history of the locality at a glance.

"It is well," he said; "a Tuscarora chief no t'ink of sleep. Sleep come standing, walking; *where* he will, *when* he will. Dog eats, den lie down to sleep; warrior always ready. Good b'ye, cap'in—to-morrow see him ag'in."

"Good night, Nick. I have ordered your old friend Mike, the Irishman, to come and sit in your room, lest you might want something in the night. You are good friends with Mike, I believe; I chose him on that account."

The Indian understood this, too; but not an angry gleam, no smile, nor any other sign, betrayed his consciousness of the captain's motives.

"Mike *good*," he answered, with emphasis. "Long tongue—short t'ink. Say much; mean little. Heart sound, like hard oak—mind, like spunk—burn quick, no too much strong."

This sententious and accurate delineation of the County-Leitrim man's characteristics induced a smile in the captain; but O'Hearn entering at the moment, and possessing his entire confidence, he saw no use in replying. In another minute the two worthies were left in possession of the bedroom, Michael having received a most solemn injunction not to be tempted to drink.

It was now so late, the captain determined to let the regular watches of the night take their course. He held a short consultation with Joyce, who took the first ward, and then threw

himself on a mattrass, in his clothes, his affectionate wife having done the same thing by the side of her daughters and grandson in an adjoining room. In a short time, the sounds of footsteps ceased in the Hut; and one unacquainted with the real state of the household, might have fancied that the peace and security of one of its ancient midnights were reigning about the Knoll.

It was just two in the morning, when the sergeant tapped lightly at the door of his commanding officer's room. The touch was sufficient to bring the captain to his feet, and he instantly demanded the news.

"Nothing but sentry-go, your honour," replied Joyce. "I am as fresh as a regiment that is just marching out of barracks, and can easily stand the guard till daylight. Still, as it was orders to call your honour at two, I could do no less, you know, sir."

"Very well, sergeant; I will just wash my eyes, and be with you in a minute. How has the night gone?"

"Famously quiet, sir. Not even an owl to

trouble it. The sentinels have kept their eyes wide open, dread of the scalping-knife being a good wakener, and no sign of any alarm has been seen. I will wait for your honour in the court, the moment of relieving guard being often chosen by a cunning enemy for the assault."

"Yes," sputtered the captain, his face just emerging from the water; "if he happen to know when that is."

In another minute, the two old soldiers were together in the court, waiting the return of Jamie Allen with his report, the mason having been sent round to the beds of the fresh men to call the guard. It was not long, however, before the old man was seen hastening towards the spot where Joyce had bid him come.

"The Lord ha' mairey on us, and on a' wretched sinners!" exclaimed Jamie, as soon as near enough to be heard without raising his voice on too high a key; "there are just the beds of the three Connecticut lads that were to come into the laird's guard, as empty as a robin's nest fra' which the young ha' flown!"

"Do you mean, Jamie, that the boys have deserted?"

"It 's just that; and no need of ca'ing it by anither name. The Hoose o' Hanover wad seem to have put the deil in a' the lads, women and children included, and to have raised up a spirit o' disaffection, that is fast leaving us to carry on this terrible warfare with our ain hearts and bodies."

"With your honour's permission," said the sergeant, "I would ask Corporal Allen if the deserters have gone off with their arms and accoutrements?"

"Airms? Ay, and legs, and a' belonging to 'em, with mair that is the lawfu' property of the laird. Not so much as a flint is left behind."

"Then we may count on seeing all the fellows in the enemy's ranks," the sergeant quietly remarked, helping himself to the tobacco from which he had refrained throughout the previous hours of the night, Joyce being too much of a *martinet* to smoke or chew on duty. "It 's uphill work, your honour, when every deserter

counts two, in this manner. The civil wars, however, are remarkable for this sort of wheeling, and facing to the right-about; the same man often changing his colours two or three times in a campaign."

Captain Willoughby received the news of this addition to his ill luck with an air of military stoicism, though he felt, in reality, more like a father and a husband on the occasion than like a hero. Accustomed to self-command, he succeeded in concealing the extent of his uneasiness, while he immediately set about inquiring into the extent of the evil.

"Joel is to join my watch," he said, "and *he* may throw some light on this affair. Let us call him, at once, for a few minutes may prove of importance."

Even while speaking, the captain crossed the court, accompanied by the sergeant and mason; and, ceremony being little attended too on such occasions, they all entered the quarters of Strides in a body. The place was empty! Man, woman, and children had abandoned the spot, seemingly in a body; and this, too, far from empty-handed.

The manner in which the room had been stripped, indeed, was the first fact which induced the captain to believe that a man so much and so long trusted would desert him in a strait so serious. There could be no mistake; and, for a moment, the husband and father felt such a sinking of the heart as would be apt to follow the sudden conviction that his enemies must prevail.

"Let us look further, Joyce," he said, "and ascertain the extent of the evil at once."

"This is a very bad example, your honour, that Corporal Strides has set the men, and we may expect to hear of more desertions. A non-commissioned officer should have had too much pride for this! I have always remarked, sir, in the army, that when a non-commissioned officer left his colours, he was pretty certain to carry off a platoon with him."

The search justified this opinion of the sergeant. A complete examination of the quarters of all the men having been made, it was ascertained that every white man in the Hut, the sergeant, Jamie Allen, and a young New England labourer of the name of Blodget, excepted,

had abandoned the place. Every man had carried off with him his arms and ammunition, leaving the rooms as naked of defence as they had been before they were occupied. Women and children, too, were all gone, proving that the flights had been made deliberately, and with concert. This left the Hut to be defended by its owner, the sergeant, the two Plinies, and a young descendant of the same colour, Jamie Allen, Blodget, and Mike, who had not yet been relieved from his ward over the Indian; eight men in all, who might possibly receive some assistance from the four black females in the kitchen.

The captain examined this small array of force, every man but Mike being up and in the line, with a saddened countenance; for he remembered what a different appearance it made only the previous day, when he had his gallant son, too, with him, a host in himself. It added mortification to regret, also, when he remembered that this great loss had been made without a single blow having been struck in defence of his precious family and his lawful rights.

"We must close the gate of the court, and bar it at once, Joyce," the captain said, as soon as fully apprised of the true state of his force. "It will be quite sufficient if we make good the house, with this handful of men, giving up all hope of doing anything with the stockade. It is the facility offered by the open gateway that has led to all this mischief."

"I don't know, your honour. When desertion once fairly gets into a man's mind, it 's wonderful the means he will find to bring about his wishes. Corporal Strides, no doubt, has passed his family and his kit through both gates; for, being in authority, our people were hardly disciplined enough to understand the difference between a non-commissioned officer *on* guard and one *off* guard; but, there were a hundred ways to mischief, even had there been no gate. Jamie, take one of the blacks, and bar the inner gate. What is your honour's pleasure next?"

"I wish my mind were at ease on the subject of the Tuscarora. With Nick's assistance as a runner and spy, and even as a sharp-shooter, we should be vastly stronger. See to the gate your-

self, sergeant; then follow me to Mr. Woods' room."

This was done, the captain waiting for his companion on the threshold of the outer door. Ascending the narrow stairs, they were soon on the floor above, and were happy to find the door of the Tuscarora's prison fastened without, as they had left it; this precaution having been taken as a salutary assistance to O'Hearn's sagacity. Undoing these fastenings, the sergeant stepped aside to allow his superior to precede him, as became their respective stations. The captain advanced, holding the lantern before him, and found an empty room. Both Nick and Mike were gone, though it was not easy to discover by what means they had quitted the place. The door was secure, the windows were down, and the chimney was too small to allow of the passage of a human body. The defection of the Irishman caused the captain great pain, while it produced surprise even in the sergeant. Mike's fidelity had been thought of proof; and, for an instant, the master of the place was disposed to believe some evil spirit had been at work to corrupt his people.

"This is more than I could have expected, Joyce!" he said, as much in sorrow as in anger. "I should have as soon looked for the desertion of old Pliny as that of Mike!"

"It is extr'or'nary, sir; but one is never safe without in-and-in discipline. A drill a-week, and that only for an hour or two of a Saturday afternoon, Captain Willoughby, may make a sort of country militia, but it will do nothing for the field. 'Talk of enlisting men for a year, Sergeant Joyce,' said old Colonel Flanker to me, one day in the last war—'why, it will take a year to teach a soldier how to eat. Your silly fellows in the provincial assemblies fancy because a man has teeth, and a stomach, and an appetite, that he knows how to *eat;* but eating is an *art*, sergeant, and military eating above all other branches of it; and I maintain a soldier can no more learn how to eat,'—as a soldier, the colonel meant, your honour,—'than he can learn to plan a campaign by going through the manual exercise.' For my part, Captain Willoughby, I have always thought it took a man his five first years' enlistment to learn how to obey orders."

"I had thought that Irishman's heart in the right place, Joyce, and counted as much on him as I did on you!"

"On me, Captain Willoughby!" answered the sergeant, in a tone of mortification. "I should think your honour would have made some difference between your old orderly — a man who had served thirty years in your own regiment, and most of the time in your own company, and a bit of a wild Hibernian of only ten years' acquaintance, and he a man who never saw a battalion paraded for real service!"

"I see my error now, Joyce; but Michael had so much blundering honesty about him, or seemed to have, that I have been his dupe. It is too late, however, to repine; the fellow is gone; it only remains to ascertain the manner of his flight. May not Joel have undone the fastenings of the door, and let him and the Indian escape together, in common with the rest of the deserters?"

"I secured that door, sir, with my own hands, in a military manner, and know that it was found as I left it. The Rev. Mr. Woods' bed seems

to have been disturbed; perhaps that may furnish a clue."

A clue the bed did furnish, and it solved the problem. The bed-cord was removed, and both the sheets and one of the blankets, were missing. This directed the inquiry to the windows, one of which was not closed entirely. A chimney stood near the side of this window, and by its aid it was not difficult to reach the ridge of the roof. On the inner side of the roof was the staging, or walk, already mentioned; and once on that, a person could make the circuit of the entire roof, in perfect safety. Joyce mounted to the ridge, followed by the captain, and gained the staging with a little effort, whence they proceeded round the buildings, to ascertain if the rope was not yet hanging over the exterior, as a means of descent. It was found as expected, and withdrawn, lest it might be used to introduce enemies within the house.

These discoveries put the matter of Michael's delinquency at rest. He had clearly gone off with his prisoner, and might next be looked for in the ranks of the besiegers. The conviction of this truth gave the captain more than uneasiness; it

caused him pain, for the County-Leitrim man had been a favourite with the whole family, and most especially with his daughter Maud.

"I do not think you and the blacks will leave me, Joyce," he observed, as the sergeant and himself descended by the common passage to the court. "On *you* I can rely, as I would rely on my noble son, were he with me at this moment."

"I beg your honour's pardon—few words tell best for a man, deeds being his duty—but, if your honour will have the condescension just to issue your orders, the manner in which they shall be obeyed will tell the whole story."

"I am satisfied of that, sergeant; we must put shoulder to shoulder, and die in the breach, should it be necessary, before we give up the place."

By this time the two old soldiers were again in the court, where they found all their remaining force, of the male sex; the men being too uneasy, indeed, to think of going to their pallets, until better assured of their safety. Captain Willoughby ordered Joyce to draw them up in line again, when he addressed them once more in person.

"My friends," the captain commenced, "there

would be little use in attempting to conceal from you our real situation; nor would it be strictly honest. You see here every man on whom I can now depend for the defence of my fireside and family. Mike has gone with the rest, and the Indian has escaped in his company. You can make up your own opinions of our chances of success, but my resolution is formed. Before I open a gate to the merciless wretches without, who are worse than the savages of the wilderness, possessing all their bad and none of their redeeming qualities, it is my determination to be buried under the ruins of this dwelling. But you are not bound to imitate my example; and, if any man among you, black or white, regrets being here at this moment, he shall still have arms and ammunition, and food given him, the gates shall be opened, and he may go freely to seek his safety in the forest. For God's sake, let there be no more desertions; he that wishes to quit me, may now quit me unmolested; but, after this moment, martial law will be enforced, and I shall give orders to shoot down any man detected in treachery, as I would shoot down a vicious dog."

This address was heard in profound silence. No man stirred, nor did any man speak.

"Blodget," continued the captain, "you have been with me a shorter time than any other person present, and cannot feel the same attachment to me and mine as the rest. You are the only native American among us, Joyce excepted,—for we count the blacks as nothing in respect to country,—and may feel that I am an Englishman born, as I fear has been the case with the rest of your friends. Perhaps I ought not to ask you to remain. Take your arms, then, and make the best of your way to the settlements. Should you reach Albany, you might even serve me essentially by delivering a letter I will confide to you, and which will bring us effectual succour."

The young man did not answer, though his fingers worked on the barrel of his musket, and he shifted his weight from leg to leg, like one whose inward feelings were moved.

"I believe I understand you, Captain Willoughby," he said, at length, "though I think you don't understand *me*. I know you old country people think meanly of us new country

people, but I suppose that 's in the natur' of things; then, I allow Joel Strides' conduct has been such as to give you reason to judge us harshly. But there is a difference among *us*, as well as among the English; and some of us—I won't say I am such a man; but actions speak louder than words, and all will be known in the end—but *some* of us will be found true to our bargains, as well as other men."

"Bravely answered, my lad," cried the sergeant heartily, and looking round at his commander with exultation, to congratulate him on having such a follower. "This is a man who will obey orders through thick and thin, I 'll answer for it, your honour. Little does he care who 's King or who 's governor, so long as he knows his captain and his corps."

"There you are mistaken, Sergeant Joyce," the youth observed firmly. "I 'm for my country; and I 'd quit this house in a minute, did I believe Captain Willoughby meant to help the Crown. But I have lived long enough here to know he is at the most neutral; though I think

he rather favours the side of the colonies than that of the Crown."

"You have judged rightly, Blodget," observed the captain. "I do not quite like this declaration of independence, though I can scarce blame Congress for having made it. Of the two, I think the Americans nearest right; and I now conceive myself to be more of an American than an Englishman. I wish this to be understood, Joyce."

"Do you, sir? It 's just as your honour pleases. I didn't know which side it was your pleasure to support, nor does it make any great difference with most of us. Orders are orders, let them come from King or Colonies. I would take the liberty of recommending, your honour, that this young man be promoted. Strides' desertion has left a vacancy among the corporals, and we shall want another for the guard. It would hardly do to make a nigger a corporal."

"Very well, Joyce, have it as you wish," interrupted the captain a little impatiently; for he perceived he had a spirit to deal with in Blodget that must hold such trifles at their true value.

"Let it be Corporal Allen and Corporal Blodget in future."

"Do you hear, men?—these are general orders. The relieved guard will fall out, and try to get a little sleep, as we shall parade again half an hour before day."

Alas! the relieved guard, like the relief itself, consisted of only two men, Corporal Blodget and Pliny the younger; old Pliny, in virtue of his household work, being rated as an idler. These five, with the captain and the sergeant, made the number of the garrison seven, which was the whole male force that now remained.

Captain Willoughby directed Joyce and his two companions to go to their pallets, notwithstanding, assuming the charge of the look-out himself, and profiting by the occasion to make himself better acquainted with the character of his new corporal than circumstances had hitherto permitted.

CHAPTER II.

For thee they fought, for thee they fell,
And their oath was on thee laid;
To thee the clarions raised their swell,
And the dying warriors pray'd.

PERCIVAL.

THE distaste for each other which existed between the people of New England and those of the adjoining colonies, anterior to the war of the revolution, is a matter of history. It was this feeling that threw Schuyler, one of the ablest and best men in the service of his country, into the shade, a year later than the period of which we are writing. This feeling was very naturally produced, and, under the circumstances, was quite likely to be active in a revolution. Although New England and New York were contiguous territories, a wide difference existed between their social conditions. Out of the larger towns, there

could scarcely be said to be a gentry at all, in the former; while the latter, a conquered province, had received the framework of the English system, possessing lords of the manor, and divers other of the fragments of the feudal system. So great was the social equality throughout the interior of the New England provinces, indeed, as almost to remove the commoner distinctions of civilised associations, bringing all classes surprisingly near the same level, with the exceptions of the very low, or some rare instance of an individual who was raised above his neighbours by unusual wealth, aided perhaps by the accidents of birth, and the advantages of education.

The results of such a state of society are easily traced. Habit had taken the place of principles, and a people accustomed to see even questions of domestic discipline referred, either to the Church or to public sentiment, and who knew few or none of the ordinary distinctions of social intercourse, submitted to the usages of other conditions of society with singular distaste and stubborn reluctance. The native of New England deferred singularly to great wealth, in 1776,

as he is known to defer to it to-day; but it was opposed to all his habits and prejudices to defer to social station. Unused to intercourse with what was then called the great world of the provinces, he knew not how to appreciate its manners or opinions; and, as is usual with the provincial, he affected to despise that which he neither practised nor understood. This at once indisposed him to acknowledge the distinctions of classes; and, when accident threw him into the adjoining province, he became marked, at once, for decrying the usages he encountered, comparing them, with singular self-felicitation, to those he had left behind him; sometimes with justice beyond a doubt, but oftener in provincial ignorance and narrow bigotry.

A similar state of things, on a larger scale, has been witnessed, more especially in western New York since the peace of '83; the great inroads of emigrants from the New England states having almost converted that district of country into an eastern colony. Men of the world, while they admit how much has been gained in activity, available intelligence of the practical school, and

enterprise, regret that the fusion has been quite so rapid and so complete; it being apparently a law of nature that nothing precious that comes of man shall be enjoyed altogether without alloy.

The condition in which Captain Willoughby was now placed, might have been traced to causes connected with the feelings and habits above alluded to. It was distasteful to Joel Strides, and one or two of his associates, to see a social chasm as wide as that which actually existed between the family of the proprietor of the Knoll and his own, growing no narrower; and an active cupidity, with the hopes of confiscations, or an abandonment of the estate, came in aid of this rankling jealousy of station; the most uneasy, as it is the meanest of all our vices. Utterly incapable of appreciating the width of that void which separates the gentleman from the man of coarse feelings and illiterate vulgarity, he began to preach that doctrine of exaggerated and mistaken equality which says, "one man is as good as another," a doctrine that is nowhere engrafted even on the most democratic of our institutions to-day, since it would totally supersede the elec-

tions and leave us to draw lots for public trusts, as men are drawn for juries. On ordinary occasions, the malignant machinations of Strides would probably have led to no results; but, aided by the opinions and temper of the times, he had no great difficulty in undermining his masters's popularity, by incessant and well-digested appeals to the envy and cupidity of his companions. The probity, liberality, and manly sincerity of Captain Willoughby often counteracted his schemes, it is true; but, as even the stone yields to constant attrition, so did Joel finally succeed in overcoming the influence of these high qualities, by dint of perseverance and cunning, not a little aided by certain auxiliaries freely obtained from the Father of Lies.

As our tale proceeds, Joel's connection with the late movement will become more apparent; and we prefer leaving the remainder of the explanations to take their proper places in the course of the narrative.

Joyce was so completely a matter of drill, that he was in a sound sleep three minutes after he had lain down; the negro who belonged to his

guard imitating his industry in this particular with equal coolness. As for the thoughtful Scotchman, Jamie Allen, sleep and he were strangers that night. To own the truth, the disaffection of Mike not only surprised, but it disappointed him. He remained in the court, therefore, conversing on the subject with the "laird," after his companions had fallen asleep.

"I wad na ha' thought that o' Michael," he said, "for the man had an honest way with him, and was so seeming valiant, that I could na ha' supposed him capable of proving a desairter. Mony 's the time that I 've heard him swear—for Michael was an awfu' hand at that vice, when his betters were no near to rebuke him—but often has he swore that Madam and her winsome daughters were the pride of his een; ay, and their delight too!"

"The poor fellow has yielded to my unlucky fortune, Jamie," returned the captain, "and I sometimes think it were better had you all imitated his example."

"Begging pairdon, Captain Willoughby, for the familiarity, but ye 're just wrang fra' be-

ginning to end, in the supposition. No man with a hairt in his body wad desairt ye in a time like this, and no mair 's to be said in the matter. Nor do I think that luuk has had anything to do with Michael's deficiency, unless ye ca' it luuk to be born and edicated in a misguiding religion. Michael's Catholicity is at the bottom of his backsliding, ye 'll find, if ye look closely into the maiter."

"I do not see how that is to be made out, Allen; all sects of the Christian religion, I believe, teaching us to abide by our engagements, and to perform our duties."

"Na doubt, na doubt, 'Squire Willoughby; there 's a seeming desire to teach as much in a' churches; but ye 'll no deny that the creatur' o' Rome wears a mask, and that Catholicity is, at the best, but a wicked feature to enter into the worship of God."

"Catholicism, Jamie, means adherence to the Catholic Church —"

"Just that—just that," interrupted the Scot eagerly; "and it 's that o' which I complain.

All Protestants, wather fully disposed or ainly half-disposed, as may be the case with the English Kirk, all Protestants agree in condemning the varry word Catholic, which is a sign and a symbol of the foul woman o' Babylon."

"Then, Jamie, they agree in condemning what they don't understand. I should be sorry to think I am not a member of the Catholic Church myself."

"Yersel'! No, Captain Willoughby, ye 're no Catholic, though you are a bit akin to it, perhaps. I know that Mr. Woods, that 's now in the hands o' the savages, prays for the Catholics, and professes to believe in what he ca's the 'Holy Catholic Kirk;' but then I 've always supposed that was in the way o' Christian charity like; for one is obleeged to use decent language, ye 'll be acknowledging, sir, in the pulpit, if it 's only for appearance's sake."

"Well, well, Jamie; a more fitting occasion may occur for discussing matters of this nature, and we will postpone the subject to another time. I may have need of your services an hour or two

hence, and it will be well for every man to come to the work fresh and clear-headed. Go to your pallet then, and expect an early call."

The mason was not a man to oppose such an order coming from the "laird;" and he withdrew, leaving the Captain standing in the centre of the court quite alone. We say alone, for young Blodget had ascended to the gallery or staging that led around the inner sides of the roofs, while the negro on guard was stationed at the gateway, as the only point where the Hut could be possibly carried by a *coup-de-main*. As the first of these positions commanded the best exterior view from the inside of the buildings, the captain mounted the stairs he had so recently descended, and joined the young Rhode islander at his post.

The night was starlight, but the elevation at which the two watchers were placed was unfavourable to catching glimpses of any lurking enemy. The height confounded objects with the ground on which they were placed, though Blodget told the captain he did not think a man could cross the palisades without his being seen. By moving along the staging on the southern side of

the quadrangle, he could keep a tolerable look-out on the front and two flanks at the same time. Still, this duty could not be performed without considerable risk, as the head and shoulders of a man moving along the ridge of the building would be almost certain to attract the eye of any Indian without. This was the first circumstance that the captain remarked on joining his companion, and gratitude induced him to point it out, in order that the other might, in a degree at least, avoid the danger.

"I suppose, Blodget, this is the first of your service," said Captain Willoughby; "and it is not easy to impress on a young man the importance of unceasing vigilance against savage artifices."

"I admit the truth of all you say, sir," answered Blodget; "though I do not believe any attempt will be made on the house until the other side has sent in what the sergeant calls another flag."

"What reason have you for supposing this?" asked the captain in a little surprise.

"It seems unreasonable for men to risk their

lives when an easier way to conquest may seem open to them. That is all I meant, Captain Willoughby."

"I believe I understand you, Blodget. You think Joel and his friends have succeeded so well in drawing off my men, that they may be inclined to wait a little in order to ascertain if further advantages may not be obtained in the same way."

Blodget confessed that he had some such thoughts in his mind, while, at the same time, he declared that he believed the disaffection would go no further.

"It is not easy for it to do so," returned the captain, smiling a little bitterly as he remembered how many who had eaten of his bread, and had been cared for by him in sickness and adversity, had deserted him in his need, "unless they persuade my wife and daughters to follow those who have led the way."

Respect kept Blodget silent for a minute, then uneasiness induced him to speak.

"I hope Captain Willoughby don't distrust

any who now remain with him," he said: "if so, I know *I* must be the person."

"Why you, in particular, young man? With you, surely, I have every reason to be satisfied."

"It cannot be Sergeant Joyce, for he will stay until he gets your orders to march," the youth replied, not altogether without humour in his manner; "and, as for the Scotchman, he is old, and men of his years are not apt to wait so long if they intend to be traitors. The negroes all love you, as if you were their father, and there is no one but me left to betray you."

"I thank you for this short enumeration of my strength, Blodget, since it gives me new assurance of my people's fidelity. You I *will* not distrust, the others I *cannot;* and there is a feeling of high confidence—What do you see?—why do you lower your piece, and stand at guard in this manner?"

"That is a man's form, sir, on the right of the gate, trying to climb the palisades. I have had my eye on it for some time, and I feel sure of my aim."

"Hold an instant, Blodget; let us be certain before we act."

The young man lowered the butt of his piece, waiting patiently and calmly for his superior to decide. There was a human form visible sure enough, and it was seen slowly and cautiously rising until it reached the summit of the stockade, where it appeared to pause to reconnoitre. Whether it were a pale-face or a red-skin it was impossible to distinguish, though the whole movement left little doubt that an assailant or a spy was attempting to pass the outer defences.

"We cannot spare that fellow," said the captain, with a little regret in his manner; "it is more than we can afford. You must bring him down, Blodget. The instant you have fired, come to the other end of the stage, where we will watch the result."

This arranged, the captain prudently passed away from the spot, turning to note the proceedings of his companion, the moment he was at the opposite angle of the gallery. Blodget was in no haste. He waited until his aim was certain; then the stillness of the valley was rudely broken

by the sharp report of a rifle, and a flash illumined its obscurity. The figure fell outward, like a bird shot from its perch, lying in a ball at the foot of the stockade. Still, no cry or groan gave evidence of nature surprised by keen and unexpected anguish. At the next instant Blodget was by Captain Willoughby's side. His conduct was a pledge of fidelity that could not be mistaken, and a warm squeeze of the hand assured the youth of his superior's approbation.

It was necessary to be cautious, however, and to watch the result with ceaseless vigilance. Joyce and the men below had taken the alarm, and the sergeant with his companions were ordered up on the stage immediately, leaving the negro alone to watch the gate. A message was also sent to the females, to give them confidence, and particularly to direct the blacks to arm, and to repair to the loops.

All this was done without confusion, and with so little noise as to prevent those without from understanding what was in progress. Terror kept the negroes silent, and discipline the others. As every one had lain down in his or her clothes, it

was not a minute before every being in the hut was up, and in motion. It is unnecessary to speak of the mental prayers and conflicting emotions with which Mrs. Willoughby and her daughters prepared themselves for the struggle; and, yet, even the beautiful and delicate Maud braced her nerves to meet the emergency of a frontier assault. As for Beulah, gentle, peaceful, and forgiving as she was by nature, the care of little Evert aroused all the mother within her, and something like a frown that betokened resolution was, for a novelty, seen on her usually placid face.

A moment sufficed to let Joyce and his companions into the state of affairs. There now being four armed men on the stage, one took each of the three exposed sides of the buildings to watch, leaving the master of the house to move from post to post, to listen to suggestions, hear reports, and communicate orders.

The dark object that lay at the foot of the palisades was pointed out to the sergeant the instant he was on the stage, and one of his offices was to observe it, in order to ascertain if it

moved, or whether any attempts were made to carry off the body. The American Indians attach all the glory or shame of a battle to the acquisition or loss of scalps, and one of their practices was to remove those who had fallen, at every hazard, in order to escape the customary mutilation: Some tribes even believed it disgrace to suffer a dead body to be struck by the enemy, and many a warrior has lost his life in the effort to save the senseless corpse of a comrade from this fancied degradation.

As soon as the little stir created in the Hut by the mustering of the men was over, a stillness, as profound as that which had preceded the alarm, reigned around the place. No noise came from the direction of the mill; no cry, or call, or signal of battle was heard; everything lay in the quiet of midnight. Half an hour thus passed, when the streak of light that appeared in the east announced the approach of day.

The twenty minutes that succeeded were filled with intense anxiety. The slow approach of light gradually brought out object after object in the little panorama, awakening and removing

alike conjectures and apprehensions. At first the grey of the palisades became visible; then the chapel, in its sombre outlines; the skirts of the woods; the different cabins that lined them; the cattle in the fields, and the scattering trees. As for Joyce, he kept his gaze fastened on the object at the foot of the stockade, expecting every instant there would be an attempt to carry it off.

At length the light became so strong as to allow the eye to take in the entire surface of the natural *glacis* without the defences, bringing the assurance that no enemy was near. As the ground was perfectly clear, a few fruit-trees and shrubs on the lawn excepted, and by changing positions on the stage these last could now be examined on all sides, nothing was easier than to make certain of this fact. The fences, too, were light and open, rendering it impossible for any ambush or advancing party to shelter itself behind them. In a word, daylight brought the comfortable assurance to those within the palisades that another night was passed without bringing an assault.

"We shall escape this morning, I do believe, Joyce," said the captain, who had laid down his rifle, and no longer felt it necessary to keep the upper portions of his body concealed behind the roof—"Nothing can be seen that denotes an intention to attack, and not an enemy is near."

"I will take one more thorough look, your honour," answered the sergeant, mounting to the ridge of the building, where he obtained the immaterial advantage of seeing more at the same time, at the risk of exposing his whole person, should any hostile rifle be in reach of a bullet—"then we may be certain."

Joyce was a man who stood just six feet in his stockings; and, losing no part of this stature by his setting up, a better object for a sharpshooter could not have been presented than he now offered. The crack of a rifle soon saluted the ears of the garrison; then followed the whizzing of the bullet, as it came humming through the air towards the Hut. But the report was so distant as at once to announce that the piece was discharged from the margin of the forest; a certain evidence of two important facts: one,

that the enemy had fallen back to a cover; the other, that the house was narrowly watched.

Nothing tries the nerves of a young soldier more than the whizzing of a distant fire. The slower a bullet or a shot approaches, the more noise it makes; and the sound continuing longer than is generally imagined, the uninitiated are apt to imagine that the dangerous missile is travelling on an errand directly towards themselves. Space appears annihilated, and raw hands are often seen to duck at a round shot that is possibly flying a hundred yards from them.

On the present occasion, the younger Pliny fairly squatted below the roof; Jamie thought it prudent to put some of his own masonry, which was favourably placed in an adjacent chimney for such a purpose, between him and the spot whence the report proceeded; while even Blodget looked up into the air, as if he expected to *see* where the bullet was going. Captain Willoughby had no thought of the missile; he was looking for the smoke in the skirts of the woods to note the spot; while Joyce, with folded arms, stood at rest on the ridge, actually examining the valley in an-

other direction, certain that a fire so distant could not be very dangerous.

Jamie's calculation proved a good one. The bullet struck against the chimney, indented a brick, and fell upon the shingles of the roof. Joyce descended at the next instant, and he coolly picked up, and kept tossing the flattened bit of lead in his hand for the next minute or two, with the air of a man who seemed unconscious of having it at all.

"The enemy is besieging us, your honour," said Joyce, "but he will not attack at present. If I might presume to advise, we shall do well to leave a single sentinel on this stage, since no one can approach the palisades without being seen, if the man keeps in motion."

"I was thinking of this myself, sergeant; we will first post Blodget here. We can trust him; and as the day advances a less intelligent sentinel will answer. At the same time, he must be instructed to keep an eye in the rear of the Hut, danger often coming from the quarter least expected."

All this was done, and the remainder of the

men descended to the court. Captain Willoughby ordered the gate to be unbarred, when he passed outside, taking the direction towards the lifeless body, which still lay where it had fallen, at the foot of the stockades. He was accompanied by Joyce and Jamie Allen, the latter carrying a spade, it being the intention to inter the savage as the shortest means of getting rid of a disagreeable object. Our two old soldiers had none of the sensitiveness on the subject of exposure that is so apt to disturb the tyro in the art of war. With sentinels properly posted, they had no apprehensions of dangers that did not exist, and they moved with confidence and steadily wherever duty called. Not only was the inner gate opened and passed, but the outer also, the simple precaution of stationing a man at the first being the only safeguard taken.

When outside of the palisades, the captain and his companions proceeded at once towards the body. It was now sunrise, and a rich light was illuminating the hill-tops, though the direct rays of the luminary had not yet descended to the valley. There lay the Indian, precisely as he

had fallen, no warrior having interposed to save him from the scalping-knife. His head had reached the earth first, and the legs and body were tumbled on it in a manner to render the form a confused pile of legs and blanket, rather than a bold savage stretched in the repose of death.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed the captain, as the three approached the spot; "it is to be hoped Blodget's bullet did its commission faithfully, else the fall must have hurt him sadly."

"By Jove, 'tis nothing but a stuffed soldier!" cried Joyce, rolling the ingeniously contrived bundle over with his foot; "and here the lad's ball has passed directly through its head! This is Injin deviltry, sir; it has been tried in order to see whether our sentinels were or were not asleep."

"To me, Joyce, it seems more like a white man's clumsiness. The fellow has been made to resemble an Indian, but people of our own colour have had a hand in the affair."

"Well, sir, let that be as it may, it is lucky our youngster had so quick an eye, and so nimble a finger. See, your honour, here is the pole by

which the effigy was raised to the top of the palisades; and here is the trail on the grass yet, by which his supporter has crept off. The fellow seems to have scrambled along in a hurry; his trail is as plain as that of a whole company."

The captain examined the marks left on the grass, and was of opinion that more than one man had been employed to set up the decoy figure, a circumstance that seemed probable in itself, when the weight of the image and the danger of exposure were remembered. Let that be as it might, he was rejoiced, on reflection, that no one was hurt, and he still retained the hope of being able to come to such an understanding with his invaders as to supersede the necessity of actual violence.

"At all events, your honour, I will carry the quaker in," said Joyce, tossing the stuffed figure on a shoulder. "He will do to man the quaker-gun at least, and may be of use in frightening some one of the other side more than he has yet frightened us."

Captain Willoughby did not object, though he reminded Joyce that the desertions had probably

put the enemy in possession of a minute statement of their defences and force, including the history of the wooden gun. If Joel and his fellow-delinquents had joined the party at the mill, the name, age, character, and spirit of every man remaining in the garrison were probably known to its leaders; and neither quakers nor paddies would count for much in opposing an assault.

The captain came within the gate of the palisades last, closing, barring, and locking it with his own hands, when all immediate apprehensions from the enemy ceased. He knew, certainly, that it would probably exceed his present means of resistance to withstand a vigorous assault; but, on the other hand, he felt assured that Indians would never approach a stockade in open day, and expose themselves to the hazard of losing some fifteen or twenty of their numbers before they could carry the place. This was opposed to all their notions of war, neither honour nor advantage tempting them to adopt it. As for the first, agreeably to savage notions, glory was to be measured by the number of scalps taken and

lost; and, counting all the women left in the Hut, there would not be heads enough to supply a sufficient number to prove an offset to those which would probably be lost in the assault.

All this did the captain discuss in few words with the sergeant, when he proceeded to join his anxious and expecting wife and daughters.

"God has looked down upon us in mercy, and protected us this night," said the grateful Mrs. Willoughby, with streaming eyes, as she received and returned her husband's warm embrace. "We cannot be too thankful, when we look at these dear girls and our precious little Evert. If Robert were only with us now, I should be entirely happy!"

"Such is human nature, my little Maud," answered the captain, drawing his darling towards himself and kissing her polished forehead. "The very thoughts of being in our actual strait would have made your mother as miserable as her worst enemy could wish, — if, indeed, there be such a monster on earth as *her* enemy; and now she protests she is delighted because our throats were not all cut last night. We are safe enough

for the day, I think, and not another night shall one of you pass in the Hut, if I can have my way. If there be such a thing as desertion, there is such a thing as evacuation also."

"Hugh! what *can* you, *do* you mean? Remember, we are surrounded by a wilderness."

"I know our position reasonably well, wife of mine, and intend to turn that knowledge to some account, God willing, and aiding. I mean to place old Hugh Willoughby by the side of Xenophon and Washington; and let the world see what a man is capable of, on a retreat, when he has such a wife, two such daughters, and a grandson like that on his hands. As for Bob, I would not have him here on any account. The young dog would run away with half the glory."

The ladies were too delighted to find their father and husband in such spirits to be critical, and all soon after sat down to an early breakfast, to eat with what appetite they could.

CHAPTER III.

Yet I well remember
The favours of these men: were they not mine?
Did they not sometimes cry, all hail! to me?
So Judas did to Christ: but he, in twelve
Found truth in all but one; I in twelve thousand none.
Richard II.

THAT which Captain Willoughby had said in seeming pleasantry he seriously meditated. The idea of passing another night in the Hut, supported by only six men, with more than ten times that number besieging him, and with all the secrets of his defences known, through the disaffection of his retainers, was, to the last degree, painful to him. Had his own life alone been at risk, military pride might have tempted him to remain; but his charge was far too precious to be exposed on account of considerations so vain.

No sooner, therefore, was the breakfast over, than the captain summoned Joyce to a consultation on the contemplated movement. The interview took place in the library, whither the sergeant repaired, on receiving his superior's orders. As to the party without, no apprehension was felt, so long as the sentinels were even moderately vigilant, and the day lasted.

"I suppose, sergeant," commenced Captain Willoughby, "a soldier of your experience is not to be taught what is the next resort of a commanding officer, when he finds himself unable to make good his ground against his enemy in front?"

"It is to retreat, your honour. The road that cannot be passed, must be turned."

"You have judged rightly. It is now my intention to evacuate the Hut, and to try our luck on a march to the rear. A retreat, skilfully executed, is a creditable thing; and any step appears preferable to exposing the dear beings in the other room to the dangers of a night assault."

Joyce appeared struck with the suggestion; though if one might have judged from the expres-

sion of his countenance, far from favourably. He reflected a moment ere he answered.

"Did your honour send for me," he then inquired, "to issue orders for this retreat, or was it your pleasure to hear anything I might have to say about it?"

"The last; I shall give no orders until I know your opinion of the measure."

"It is as much the duty of an inferior to speak his mind freely, when he is called for an opinion, Captain Willoughby, as it is to obey in silence, when he gets nothing but orders. According to my views of the matter, we shall do better to stand our ground, and try to make good the house against these vagabonds, than to trust to the woods."

"Of course you have your reasons for this opinion, Joyce?"

"Certainly, your honour. In the first place, I suppose it to be against the rules of the art of war to evacuate a place that is well provisioned, without standing an assault. This we have not yet done. It is true, sir, that our ranks are thinned by desertions; but I never heard of a

garrisoned town, or a garrisoned house capitulating on account of a few deserters; and, I take it, evacuation is only the next step before capitulation."

"But our desertions, Joyce, have not been *few*, but *many*. Three times as many have left us, if we include our other losses, as remain. It matters not whence the loss proceeds, so long as it is a loss."

"A retreat, with women and baggage is always a ticklish operation, your honour, especially if an enemy is pressing your rear! Then we have a wilderness before us; and the ladies could hardly hold out for so long a march as that from this place to the Mohawk; short of which river they will hardly be as safe as they are at present."

"I have had no such march in view, Joyce. You know there is a comfortable hut, only a mile from this very spot, on the mountain side, where we commenced a clearing for a sheep-pasture, only three summers since. The field is in rich grass; and, could we once reach the cabin, and manage to drive a cow or two up there, we might

remain a month in security. As for provisions and clothes, we could carry enough on our backs to serve us all several weeks; especially if assisted by the cows."

"I 'm glad your honour has thought of this idea," said the sergeant, his face brightening as he listened; "it will be a beautiful operation to fall back on that position when we can hold out no longer in this. The want of some such arrangement has been my only objection to this post, Captain Willoughby; for we have always seemed to me, out here in the wilderness, like a regiment drawn up with a ravine or a swamp in its rear."

"I am glad to find you relishing the movement for any cause, sergeant. It is my intention at present to make the necessary arrangements to evacuate the Hut while it is light, and as soon as it is dark to retreat by the gates, the palisades, and the rivulet — How now, Jamie? You look as if there were news to communicate?"

Jamie Allen, in truth, had entered at that instant in so much haste as to have overlooked

the customary ceremony of sending in his name, or even of knocking.

"News!" repeated the mason, with a sort of wondering smile; "and it's just that I 've come to bring. Wad ye think it, baith, gentlemen, that our people are in their ain cabins ag'in, boiling their pots, and frying their pork, a' the same as if the valley was in a state of tranquillity, and we so many lairds waiting for them to come and do our pleasure!"

"I do not understand you, Jamie—whom do you mean by 'our people?'"

"Sure, just the desairters; Joel, and the miller, and Michael, and the rest."

"And the cabins—and the pots—and the pork—it is gibberish to me."

"I hae what ye English ca' an aiccent, I know; but, in my judgment, Captain Willoughby, the words may be comprehended without a dictionary. It 's just that Joel Strides, and Daniel the miller, and the rest o' them that fleed the past night, have gane into their ain abodes, and have lighted their fires, and put over their pots and kettles, and set up their domestic habi-

tudes, a' the same as if this Beaver Dam was ain o' the pairks of Lonnon !"

" The devil they have ! Should this be the case, sergeant, our sortie may be made at an earlier hour than that mentioned. I never will submit to such an insult."

Captain Willoughby was too much aroused to waste many words ; and, seizing his hat, he proceeded forthwith to take a look for himself. The stage, or gallery on the roofs, offering the best view, in a minute he and his two companions were on it.

" There ! ye'll be seein' a smoke in Joel's habitation with your own een ; and yon is another, in the dwelling of his cousin Seth," said Jamie, pointing in the direction he named.

" Smoke there is, of a certainty ; but the Indians may have lighted fires in the kitchen to do their own cooking. This looks like investing us, sergeant, rather more closely than the fellows have done before."

" I rather think not, your honour: Jamie is right, or my eyes do not know a man from a woman. That is certainly a female in the gar-

den of Joel; and I 'll engage it 's Phœbe, pulling onions for his craving stomach, the scoundrel!"

Captain Willoughby never moved without his little glass, and it was soon levelled at the object mentioned.

"By Jupiter! you are right, Joyce," he cried. "It is Phœbe, though the hussy is coolly weeding, not culling the onions! Ay! and now I see Joel himself; the rascal is examining some hoes with as much philosophy as if he were master of them, and all near them. This is a most singular situation to be in!"

This last remark was altogether just; the situation of those in the Hut was now singular indeed. Further examination showed that every cabin had its tenant, no one of the party that remained within the palisades being a householder. By using the glass, and pointing it in succession at the different dwellings, the captain in due time detected the presence of nearly every one of the deserters. Not a man of them all, in fact, was missing, Mike alone excepted. There they were, with their wives and children, in quiet possession of their different habitations. Nor

was this all; the business of the valley seemed as much on their minds as had been their practice for years. Cows were milked, the swine were fed, poultry was called and cared for, and each household was also making the customary preparations for the morning meal.

So absorbed was the captain with this extraordinary scene, that he remained an hour on the staging, watching the course of events. The breakfasts were soon over, having been later than common, and a little hurried; then commenced the more important occupations of the day. A field was already half ploughed, in preparation for a crop of winter grain; thither Joel himself proceeded with the necessary cattle, accompanied by the labourers who usually aided him in that particular branch of husbandry. Three ploughs were soon at work, with as much regularity and order as if nothing had occurred to disturb the tranquillity of the valley. The axes of the wood-choppers were next heard coming out of the forest, cutting fuel for the approaching winter; and a half-finished ditch had its workmen also, who were soon busy casting up the soil and fa-

shioning their trench. In a word, all the suspended toil was renewed with perfect system and order.

"This beats the devil himself, Joyce!" said the captain, after a half-hour of total silence. "Here are all these fellows at work as coolly as if I had just given them their tasks, and twice as diligently. Their unusual industry is a bad symptom of itself."

"Your honour will remark one circumstance, —not a rascal of them all comes within the fair range of a musket; for, as to throwing away ammunition at such distances, it would be clearly unmilitary, and might be altogether useless."

"I have half a mind to scatter them with a volley," said the captain doubtingly. "Bullets would take effect among those ploughmen, could they only be made to hit."

"And amang the cattle, too," observed the Scotsman, who had an eye on the more economical part of the movement, as well as on that which was military. "A ball would slay a horse as well as a man in such a skairmish."

"This is true enough, Jamie; and it is not

exactly the sort of warfare I could wish, to be firing at men who were so lately my friends. I do not see, Joyce, that the rascals have any arms with them?"

"Not a musket, sir; I noticed that, when Joel first detailed his detachments. Can it be possible that the savages have retired?"

"Not they,—else would Mr. Strides and his friends have gone with them. No, sergeant; there is a deep plan to lead us into some sort of ambush in this affair, and we will be on the look-out for them."

Joyce stood contemplating the scene for some time in profound silence, when he approached the captain formally, and made the usual military salute,—a ceremony he had punctiliously observed on all proper occasions, since the garrison might be said to be placed under martial law.

"If it 's your honour's pleasure," he said, "I will detail a detachment, and go out and bring in two or three of these deserters, by which means we shall get into their secrets."

"A detachment, Joyce!" answered the captain, eyeing his subordinate a little curiously;

"what troops do you propose to tell-off for the service?"

"Why, your honour, there 's Corporal Allen and old Pliny off duty; I think the thing might he done with them, if your honour would have the condescension to order Corporal Blodget, with the two other blacks, to form as a supporting party, under the cover of one of the fences."

"A disposition of my force that would leave Captain Willoughby for a garrison! I thank you, sergeant, for your offer and gallantry; but prudence will not permit it. We may set down Strides and his companions as so many knaves, and—"

"That may ye!" cried Mike's well-known voice, from the scuttle that opened into the garrets, directly in front of which the two old soldiers were conversing,—"that may ye, and no har-r-m done the trut', or justice, or, for that matther, meself. Och! if I had me will of the blackguards, every rogue of 'em should be bound hand and fut, and laid under that pratthy watherfall, yon at the mill, until his sins was washed out of him. Would there be confessions then?

That would there; and sich letting out of sacrets as would satisfy the conscience of a hog!"

By the time Mike had got through this sentiment he was on the staging, where he stood hitching up his nether garment, with a meaning grin on his face that gave a peculiar expression of heavy cunning to the massive jaw and capacious mouth, blended with an honesty and good-nature, that the well-meaning fellow was seldom without when he addressed any of the captain's family. Joyce glanced at the captain, expecting orders to seize the returned runaway; but his superior read at once good faith in the expression of his old retainer's countenance.

"You have occasioned us a good deal of surprise, O'Hearn, on more accounts than one," observed the captain, who thought it prudent to assume more sternness of manner than his feelings might have actually warranted. "You have not only gone off yourself, but you have suffered your prisoner to escape with you. Then your manner of getting into the house requires an explanation. I shall hear what you have to say before I make up my mind as to your conduct."

"Is it spake I will? That will I, and as long as it plase yer honour to listen. Och! isn't that Saucy Nick a quare one? Divil burn me if I thinks the likes of him is to be found in all Ameriky, full as it is of Injins and saucy fellies! Well, now, I suppose, sargeant, ye've set me down as sthriding off with Misther Joel and his likes, if ye was to open yer heart, and spake yer thrue mind?"

"You have been marked for a deserter, O'Hearn, and one, too, that deserted from post."

"Post! Had I been *that*, I shouldn't have stirred, and ye'd be wanting in the news I bring ye from the majjor, and Mr. Woods, and the savages, and the rest of the varmints."

"My son!—is this possible, Michael? Have you seen *him*, or can you tell us anything of his state?"

Mike now assumed a manner of mysterious importance, laying a finger on his nose, and pointing towards the sentinel and Jamie.

"It's the sargeant that I considers as one of the family," said the County-Leitrim man, when

his pantomime was through; "but it isn't dacent to be bawling out sacrets through a whole nighbourhood. And then, as for *Ould* Nick, or Saucy Nick, or whatever ye calls him, och! isn't he a *pratthy* Injin! Ye 'll mar-r-ch t'rough Ameriky and never see his aiquel!"

"This will never do, O'Hearn. Whatever you have to say must be said clearly, and in the simplest manner. Follow to the library, where I will hear your report. Joyce, you will accompany us."

"Let him come, if he wishes to hear wonderful achaivements!" answered Mike, making way for the captain to descend the steps, then following himself, talking as he went. "He 'll niver brag of his campaigns ag'in to the likes of me, seeing that I 've outdone him ten, ay, forty times, and boot. Och! that Nick 's a divil, and no har-r-m said!"

"In the first place, O'Hearn," resumed the captain, as soon as the three were alone in the library, "you must explain your own desertion."

"Me desart! Sure, it isn't run away from

yer honour, and the missus, and Miss Beuly, and pratthy Miss Maud, and the child, that 's yer honour's m'aning ?"

This was said with so much nature and truth that the captain had not the heart to repeat the question, though Joyce's more drilled feelings were less moved. The first even felt a tear springing to his eye, and he no longer distrusted the Irishman's fidelity, as unaccountable as his conduct did, and must, seem to his cooler judgment. But Mike's sensitiveness had taken the alarm, and it was only to be appeased by explanations.

" Yer honour 's not sp'aking when I questions ye on that same ?" he resumed doubtingly.

" Why, Mike, to be sincere, it did look a little suspicious when you not only went off yourself, but you let the Indian go off with you."

" Did it ? " said Mike musing. " No, I don't allow that, seein' that the intent and object was good. And, then, I never took the Injin wid *me ;* but 'twas I, meself, that went wid *him.*"

" I rather think, your honour," said Joyce

smiling, "we 'll put O'Hearn's name in its old place on the roster, and make no mark against him at pay-day."

"I think it will turn out so, Joyce. We must have patience, too, and let Mike tell his story in his own way."

"Is it tell a story, will I? Ah! Nick 's the cr'ature for that same! See, he has given me foor bits of sticks, every one of which is to tell a story in its own way. This is the first; and it manes, let the captain into the sacret of your retrait; and how you got out of the windie, and how you comes near to breaking yer neck by a fall, becaase of the fut's slipping; and how ye wint down the roof by a rope, the divil a bit fastening it to yer neck, but houlding it in yer hand with sich a grip as if 'twere the fait' of the church itself; and how Nick led ye to the hole out of which ye bot' wint, as if ye had been two cats going t'rough a door!"

Mike stopped to grin and look wise as he recounted the manner of the escape, the outlines of which, however, were sufficiently well known to his auditors before he began.

"Throw away that stick, now, and let us know where this hole is, and what you mean by it."

"No," answered Mike, looking at the stick in a doubting manner; "I 'll not t'row it away, wid yer honour's l'ave, till I 've told ye how we got into the brook forenent the forest, and waded up to the woods, where we was all the same as if we had been two bits of clover-tops hid in a hay-mow. That Nick is a cr'ature at consailment!"

"Go on," said the captain patiently, knowing that there was no use in hurrying one of Mike's peculiar mode of communicating his thoughts. "What came next?"

"That will I; and the r'ason comes next, as is seen by this oder stick. And, so, Nick and meself was in the chaplain's room all alone, and n'ither of us had any mind to dhrink; Nick, becaase he was a prisoner, and felt crass, and full of dignity like; and meself because I was a sentinel; and Sargeant Joyce, there, had tould me, the Lord knows how often, that if I did my duty well, I might come to be a corporal, which was next in rank to himself; barring, too, that I was a sentinel,

and a drunken sentinel is a disgrace to a man, sowl and body, and musket."

"And so neither of you drank?" put in the captain, by way of a reminder.

"For that same r'ason, and one betther still, as we had nothin' *to* dhrink. Well, says Nick, 'Mike,' says he, 'you like cap'in, and missus, and Miss Beuly, and Miss Maud, and the babby?'—'Divil burn ye, Nick,' says I, 'why do ye ask so foolish a question? Is it likes ye would know? Well—then, just ask yerself, if you likes yer own kith and kin, and ye 've got yer answer.'"

"And Nick made his proposal, on getting this answer," interrupted the captain, "which was—"

"Here it is, on the stick. 'Well,' says Nick, says he, 'run away wid Nick, and see majjor; bring back news. Nick cap'in friend, but cap'in don't know it; won't believe.' Fait', I can't *tell* yer honour all Nick said, in his own manner; and so, wid your l'ave, I 'll just tell it in my own way."

"Any way, Mike, so that you do but tell it."

"Nick 's a cr'ature! His idee was for us two

to get out of the windie, and up on the platform, and to take the bed-cord, and other things, and slide down upon the ground—and we *did* it! As sure as yer honour and the sargeant is there, we did *that same*, and no bones broke! 'Well,' says I, 'Nick, ye 're here, sure enough; but how do you mane to get *out* of here? Is it climb the palisades ye will, and be shot by a sentinel?'—if there was one, which there wasn't, yer honour, seeing that all had run away,—'or do ye mane to stay here,' says I, 'and be taken a prisoner of war ag'in, in which case ye 'll be two prisoners, seein' that ye 've been taken wonst already, will ye, Nick?' says I. So Nick never spoke, but he held up his finger, and made a sign for me to follow, as follow I did; and we just crept through the palisade, and a mhighty phratty walk we had of it, alang the meadies, and t'rough the lanes, the rest of the way."

"You crept through the palisades, Mike! There is no outlet of sufficient size."

"I admits the hole is a tight squaze, but 'twill answer. And then it 's just as good for an inlet as it is for an outlet, seein' that I came t'rough it

this very marnin'. Och! Nick's a cr'ature! And how d'ye think that hole comes there, barring all oversights in setting up the sticks?"

"It has not been made intentionally, I should hope, O'Hearn?"

"'Twas made by Joel, and that by just sawing off a post, and forcin' out a pin or two, so that the palisade works like a door. Och! it's nately contrived, and it manes mischief."

"This must be looked to, at once," cried the captain; "lead the way, Mike, and show us the spot."

As the Irishman was nothing loth, all three were soon in the court, whence Mike led the way through the gate, round to the point where the stockade came near the cliffs, on the eastern side of the buildings. This was the spot where the path that led down to the spring swept along the defences, and was on the very route by which the captain contemplated retreating, as well as on that by which Maud had entered the Hut the night of the invasion. At a convenient place a palisade had been sawed off, so low in the ground that the sods, which had been cut and were

movable, concealed the injury, while the heads of the pins that ought to have bound the timber to the cross-piece, were in their holes, leaving everything apparently secure. On removing the sods, and pushing the timber aside, the captain ascertained that a man might easily pass without the stockade. As this corner was the most retired within the works, there was no longer any doubt that the hole had been used by all the deserters, including the women and children. In what manner it became known to Nick, however, still remained matter of conjecture.

Orders were about to be given to secure this passage, when it occurred to the captain it might possibly be of use in effecting his own retreat. With this object in view, then, he hastened away from the place, lest any wandering eye without might detect his presence near it, and conjecture the cause. On returning to the library, the examination of Mike was resumed.

As the reader must be greatly puzzled with the County-Leitrim man's manner of expressing himself, we shall relate the substance of what he now uttered, for the sake of brevity. It would seem

that Nick had succeeded in persuading Mike, first, that he, the Tuscarora, was a fast friend of the captain and his family, confined by the former in consequence of a misconception of the real state of the Indian's feelings, much to the detriment of all their interests; and that no better service could be rendered the Willoughbys than to let Nick depart, and for the Irishman to go with him. Mike, however, had not the slightest idea of desertion, the motive which prevailed on him to quit the Hut being a desire to see the major, and, if possible, to help him escape. As soon as this expectation was placed before his eyes, Mike became a convert to the Indian's wishes. Like all exceedingly zealous men, the Irishman had an itching propensity to be doing, and he was filled with a sort of boyish delight at the prospect of effecting a great service to those whom he so well loved, without their knowing it. Such was the history of Michael's seeming desertion; that of what occurred after he quitted the works remains to be related.

The Tuscarora led his companion out of the Hut, within half an hour after they had been left

alone together, in the room of Mr. Woods. As this was subsequently to Joel's flight, Nick, in anticipation of this event, chose to lie in ambush a short time, in order to ascertain whether the defection was likely to go any farther. Satisfied on this head, he quietly retired towards the mill. After making a sufficient *détour* to avoid being seen from the house, Nick gave himself no trouble about getting into the woods, or of practising any of the expedients of a time of real danger, as had been done by all of the deserters; but he walked leisurely across the meadows, until he struck the highway, along which he proceeded forthwith to the rocks. All this was done in a way that showed he felt himself at home, and that he had no apprehensions of falling into an ambush. It might have arisen from his familiarity with the ground; or, it might have proceeded from the consciousness that he was approaching friends, instead of enemies.

At the rocks, however, Nick did not deem it wise to lead Mike any further, without some preliminary caution. The white man was concealed in one of the clefts, therefore, while the

Indian pursued his way alone. The latter was absent an hour; at the end of which time he returned, and, after giving Mike a great many cautions about silence and prudence, he led him to the cabin of the miller, in the buttery of which Robert Willoughby was confined. To this buttery there was a window; but, as it was so small as to prevent escape, no sentinel had been placed on the outside of the building. For his own comfort, too, and in order to possess his narrow lodgings to himself, the major had given a species of parole, by which he was bound to remain in *duresse* until the rising of the next sun. Owing to these two causes, Nick had been enabled to approach the window, and to hold communications with the prisoner. This achieved, he returned to the rocks, and led Mike to the same spot.

Major Willoughby had not been able to write much, in consequence of the darkness. That which he communicated, accordingly, had to pass through the fiery ordeal of the Irishman's brains. As a matter of course, it did not come with par-

ticular lucidity, though Mike did succeed in making his auditors comprehend this much.

The major was substantially well treated, though intimations had been given that he would be considered as a spy. Escape seemed next to impossible; still, he should not easily abandon the hope. From all he had seen, the party was one of that irresponsible character that would render capitulation exceedingly hazardous, and he advised his father to hold out to the last. In a military point of view, he considered his captors as contemptible, being without a head; though many of the men, the savages in particular, appeared to be ferocious and reckless. The whole party was guarded in discourse, and little was said in English, though he was convinced that many more whites were present than he had at first believed. Mr. Woods he had not seen, nor did he know anything of his arrest or detention.

This much Mike succeeded in making the captain comprehend, though a great deal was lost through the singular confusion that prevailed in

the mind of the messenger. Mike, however, had still another communication, which we reserve for the ears of the person to whom it was especially sent.

This news produced a pause in Captain Willoughby's determination. Some of the fire of youth awoke within him, and he debated with himself on the possibility of making a sortie, and of liberating his son, as a step preliminary to victory; or, at least, to a successful retreat. Acquainted with every foot of the ground, which had singular facilities for a step so bold, the project found favour in his eyes each minute, and soon became fixed.

CHAPTER IV.

Another love
In its lone woof began to twine ;
But, ah ! the golden thread was wove
That bound my sister's heart in mine !

WILLIS.

WHILE the captain and Joyce were digesting their plans, Mike proceeded on an errand of peculiar delicacy, with which he had been entrusted by Robert Willoughby. The report that he had returned flew through the dwellings, and many were the hearty greetings and shakings of the hand that the honest fellow had to undergo from the Plinies and Smashes ere he was at liberty to set about the execution of this trust. The wenches, in particular, having ascertained that Mike had not broken his fast, insisted on his having a comfortable meal, in a sort of servants' hall, before they would consent to his quitting their sight. As the County-Leitrim man was

singularly ready with the knife and fork, he made no very determined opposition, and, in a few minutes he was hard at work, discussing a cold ham, with the other collaterals of a substantial American breakfast.

The blacks, the Smashes inclusive, had been seriously alarmed at the appearance of the invading party. Between them and the whole family of red-men there existed a sort of innate dislike; an antipathy that originated in colour, and wool, and habits, and was in no degree lessened by apprehensions on the score of scalps.

"How you look, ole Plin, widout wool?" Big Smash had reproachfully remarked, not five minutes before Mike made his appearance in the kitchen, in answer to some apologetic observation of her husband, as to the intentions of the savages being less hostile than he had at first imagined; "why you say dey *no* murder, and steal, and set fire, when you know dey's Injin! Natur' be natur'; and dat I hear dominie Woods say t'ree time one Sunday. What 'e dominie say *often*, he mean, and dere no use in saying dey don't come to do harm."

As Great Smash was an oracle in her own set, there was no gainsaying her dogmas, and Pliny the elder was obliged to succumb. But the presence of Mike, one who was understood to have been out, *near*, if not actually *in* the enemy's camp, and a great favourite in the bargain, was a circumstance likely to revive the discourse. In fact all the negroes crowded into the hall as soon as the Irishman was seated at table, one or two eager to talk, the rest as eager to listen.

"How near you been to sabbage, Michael?" demanded Big Smash, her two large coal-black eyes seeming to open in a degree proportioned to her interest in the answer.

"I wint as nigh as there was occasion, Smash, and that was nigher than the likes of yer husband there would be thinking of travelling. Maybe 'twas as far as from my plate here to yon door; maybe not quite so far. They 're a dhirty set, and I wish to go no nearer."

"What dey look like, in 'e dark?" inquired Little Smash—"Awful as by daylight?"

"It 's not meself that stopped to admire 'em. Nick and I had our business forenent us, and

when a man is hurried, it isn't r'asonable to suppose he can kape turning his head about to see sights."

"What dey do wid Misser Woods? What sabbage want wid dominie?"

"Sure enough, little one; and the question is of yer own asking. A praist, even though he should be only a heretic, can have no great call for his sarvices, in *sich* a congregation. And, I don't think the fellows are blackguards enough to scalp a parson."

Then followed a flood of incoherent questions that were put by all the blacks in a body, accompanied by divers looks ominous of the most serious disasters, blended with bursts of laughter that broke out of their risible natures in a way to render the medley of sensations as ludicrous as it was strange. Mike soon found answering a task too difficult to be attempted, and he philosophically came to a determination to confine his efforts to masticating.

Notwithstanding the terror that actually prevailed among the blacks, it was not altogether unmixed with a resolution to die with arms in

their hands, in preference to yielding to savage clemency. Hatred, in a measure, supplied the place of courage, though both sexes had insensibly imbibed some of that resolution which is the result of habit, and of which a border life is certain to instil more or less into its subjects, in a form suited to border emergencies. Nor was this feeling confined to the men; the two Smashes, in particular, being women capable of achieving acts that would be thought heroic under circumstances likely to arouse their feelings.

"Now, Smashes," said Mike, when by his own calculation he had about three minutes to the termination of his breakfast before him, "ye 'll do what I tells ye, and no questions asked. Ye 'll find the laddies, Misses, and Miss Beuly, and Miss Maud, and ye 'll give my humble respects to 'em all—divil the bit, now, will ye be overlooking either of the t'ree, but ye' ll do yer errand genteely and like a laddy yerself—and ye 'll give my jewty and respects to 'em *all*, I tells ye, and say that Michael O'Hearn asks the honour of being allowed to wish 'em good morning."

Little Smash screamed at this message; yet she went, forthwith, and delivered it, making reasonably free with Michael's manner and gallantry in so doing.

"O'Hearn has something to tell us from Robert," said Mrs. Willoughby, who had been made acquainted with the Irishman's exploits and return; "he must be suffered to come in as soon as he desires."

With this reply, little Smash terminated her mission.

"And now, laddies and gentlemen," said Mike with gravity, as he rose to quit the servants' hall, "my blessing and good wishes be wid ye. A hearty male have I had at yer hands and yer cookery, and good thanks it desarves. As for the Injins, jist set yer hearts at rest, as not one of ye will be scalp'd the day, seeing that the savages are all to be forenent the mill this morning, houlding a great council, as I knows from Nick himself. A comfortable time, then, ye may all enjoy, wid yer heads on yer shoulters, and yer wool on yer heads."

Mike's grin, as he retreated, showed that he

meant to be facetious, having all the pleasantry that attends a full stomach uppermost in his animal nature at that precise moment. A shout rewarded this sally, and the parties separated with mutual good-humour and good feeling. In this state of mind the County-Leitrim man was ushered into the presence of the ladies. A few words of preliminary explanations were sufficient to put Mike in the proper train, when he came at once to his subject.

"The majjor is no way down-hearted," he said, "and he ordered me to give his jewty and riverence, and obligations, to his honoured mother and his sisters. 'Tell 'em, Mike,' says he, says the majjor, 'that I feels for 'em all the same as if I was their own fader; and tell 'em,' says he, 'to keep up their spirits, and all will come right in the ind. This is a throublesome wor-r-ld, but they that does their jewties to God and man, and the church, will not fail, in the long run, to wor-r-k their way, t'rough purgatory even, into paradise.'"

"Surely, my son, my dear Robert, never sent us such a message as this, Michael?"

"Every syllable of it, and a quantity moor that has slipped my memory," answered the Irishman, who was inventing, but who fancied he was committing a very pious fraud. "'Twould have done the missuses heart good to have listened to the majjor, who spoke more in the, cha*rack*ter of a praist, like, than in that of a souldier."

All three of the ladies looked a little abashed, though there was a gleam of humour about the mouth of Maud that showed she was not very far from appreciating the Irishman's report at its just value. As for Mrs. Willoughby and Beulah, less acquainted with Mike's habits, they did not so readily penetrate his manner of substituting his own desultory thoughts for the ideas of others.

"As I am better acquainted with Mike's language, dear mother," whispered Maud, "perhaps it will be well if I take him into the library and question him a little between ourselves about what actually passed. Depend on it, I shall get the truth."

"Do, my child, for it really pains me to hear Robert so much misrepresented; and as Evert must now begin to have ideas, I really do not

like that his uncle should be so placed before the dear little fellow's mind."

Maud did not even smile at this proof of a grandmother's weakness, though she felt and saw all its absurdity. Heart was ever so much uppermost with the excellent matron, that it was not easy for those she loved to regard anything but her virtues; and least of all did her daughter presume to indulge in even a thought that was ludicrous at her expense. Profiting by the assent, therefore, Maud quietly made a motion for Mike to follow, and proceeded at once to the room she had named.

Not a word was exchanged between the parties until both were in the library, when Maud carefully closed the door, her face pale as marble, and stood looking inquiringly at her companion. The reader will understand that, Mr. Woods and Joyce excepted, not a soul at the Hut, out of the limits of the Willoughby connection, knew anything of our heroine's actual relation to the captain and his family. It is true, some of the oldest of the blacks had once some vague notions on the subject, but *their* recollections had become

obscured by time, and habit was truly second nature with all of the light-hearted race.

"*That* was mighty injanious of you, Miss Maud!" Mike commenced, giving one of his expressive grins again, and fairly winking. "It shows how fri'nds wants no spache but their own minds. Barrin' mistakes and crass-accidents, I 'm sartain that Michael O'Hearn can make himself understood any day by Miss Maud Willoughby, an' niver a word said."

"Your success then, Mike, will be greater at dumb-show than it always is with your tongue," answered the young lady, the blood slowly returning to her cheek, the accidental use of the name of Willoughby removing the apprehension of anything immediately embarrassing; "what have you to tell me that you suppose I have anticipated?"

"Sure, the like o' yees needn't be tould, Miss Maud, that the majjor bad me spake to ye by yerself, and say a word that was not to be overheerd by any one else."

"This is singular — extraordinary even — but

let me know more, though the messenger be altogether so much out of the common way."

"I t'ought ye'd say *that*, when ye come to know me. Is it meself that 's a messenger? and where is there another that can carry news widout spilling any by the way? Nick 's a cr'ature, I allows; but the majjor know'd a million times bhetter than to trust an Injin with sich a jewty. As for Joel, and *that* set of vagabonds, we 'll grind 'em all in the mill before we 've done wid 'em. Let 'em look for no favours, if they wishes no disapp'intment."

Maud sickened at the thought of having any of those sacred feelings connected with Robert Willoughby that she had so long cherished in her inmost heart, rudely probed by so unskilful a hand; though her last conversation with the young soldier had told so much, even while it left so much unsaid, that she could almost kneel and implore Mike to be explicit. The reserve of a woman, notwithstanding, taught her how to preserve her sex's decorum, and to maintain appearances.

"If Major Willoughby desired you to communicate anything to me, in particular," she said, with seeming composure, "I am ready to hear it."

"Divil the word did he desire, Miss Maud, for everything was in whispers between us, but jist what I 'm about to repait. And here 's my stick, that Nick 'tould me to kape as a reminderer; it 's far bhetter for me than a book, as I can't read a syllable. 'And now, Mike,' says the majjor, says he, 'conthrive to see phratty Miss Maud by herself—'"

"*Pretty* Miss Maud!" interrupted the young lady involuntarily.

"Och! it 's meself that says *that*, and sure there 's plenty of r'ason for it; so we 'll agree it 's all right and proper—'phratty Miss Maud by herself, letting no mortal else know what you are about.' *That* was the majjor's."

"It is very extraordinary!—Perhaps it will be better, Michael, if you tell me nothing but what is strictly the major's. A message should be delivered as nearly like the words that were actually sent as possible."

"Wor-r-ds! And it isn't wor-r-ds at all that I have to give ye."

"If not a message in words, in what else can it be? Not in sticks, surely."

"In *that*," cried Mike exultingly; "and, I'll warrant, when the trut' comes out, that very little bit of silver will be found as good as forty Injin scalps."

Although Mike put a small silver snuff-box that Maud at once recognised as Robert Willoughby's property into the young lady's hand, nothing was more apparent than the circumstance that he was profoundly ignorant of the true meaning of what he was doing. The box was very beautiful, and his mother and Beulah had often laughed at the major for using an article that was then deemed *de rigueur* for a man of extreme *ton*, when all his friends knew he never touched snuff. So far from using the stimulant, indeed, he never would show how the box was opened, a secret spring existing; and he even manifested or betrayed shyness on the subject of suffering either of his sisters to search for the means of doing so.

The moment Maud saw the box her heart beat tumultuously. She had a presentiment that her fate was about to be decided. Still, she had sufficient self-command to make an effort to learn all her companion had to communicate.

"Major Willoughby gave you this box," she said, her voice trembling in spite of herself. "Did he send any message with it? Recollect yourself; the words may be very important."

"Is it the wor-r-ds? Well, it 's little of *them* that passed between us, barrin' that the Injins was so near by, that it was whisper we did, and not a bit else."

"Still there *must* have been *some* message."

"Ye are as wise as a sarpent, Miss Maud, as Father O'Loony used to tell us all of a Sunday! Was it wor-r-ds! 'Give *that* to Miss Maud,' says the majjor, says he, 'and tell her she is now *misthress of my sacret.*'"

"Did he say this, Michael?—For heaven's sake, be certain of what you tell me."

"Irish Mike, masser want you in monstrous hurry," cried the youngest of the three black men, thrusting his glistening face into the door,

announcing the object of the intrusion and disappearing almost in the same instant.

"Do not leave me, O'Hearn," said Maud, nearly gasping for breath; "do not leave me without an assurance there is no mistake."

"Divil bur-r-n me, if I'd brought the box, or the message, or anything like it, phratty Miss Maud, had I t'ought it would have done this har-r-m."

"Michael O'Hearn!" called the sergeant from the court in his most authoritative military manner, and that on a key that would not brook denial.

Mike did not dare delay: in half a minute Maud found herself standing alone in the centre of the library, holding the well-known snuff-box of Robert Willoughby in her little hand. The renowned caskets of Portia had scarcely excited more curiosity in their way than this little silver box of the major's had created in the mind of Maud. In addition to his playful evasions about letting her and Beulah pry into its mysteries, he had once said to herself, in a grave and feeling manner, "When you get at the contents of this

box, dear girl, you will learn the great secret of my life." These words had made a deep impression at the time—it was in his visit of the past year—but they had been temporarily forgotten in the variety of events and stronger sensations that had succeeded. Mike's message, accompanied by the box itself, however, recalled them, and Maud fancied that the major, considering himself to be in some dangerous emergency, had sent her the bauble in order that she might learn what that secret was. Possibly he meant her to communicate it to others. Persons in our heroine's situation feel more than they reason; and it is possible Maud might have come to some other conclusion had she been at leisure, or in a state of mind to examine all the circumstances in a more logical manner.

Now she was in possession of this long-coveted box—coveted, at least, so far as a look into its contents were concerned—Maud not only found herself ignorant of the secret by which it was opened, but she had scruples about using the means, even had she been in possession of them. At first she thought of carrying the thing to

Beulah, and of asking if she knew any way of getting at the spring, — then she shrunk from the exposure that might possibly attend such a step. The more she reflected the more she felt convinced that Robert Willoughby would not have sent *her* that particular box unless it were connected with herself in some way more than common; and, ever since the conversation in the painting-room, she had seen glimmerings of the truth in relation to his feelings. These glimmerings too had aided her in better understanding her own heart, and all her sentiments revolted at the thought of having a witness to any explanation that might relate to the subject. In every event she determined, after a few minutes of thought, not to speak of the message, or the present, to a living soul.

In this condition of mind, filled with anxiety, pleasing doubts, apprehensions, shame, and hope, all relieved however by the secret consciousness of perfect innocence, and motives that angels might avow, Maud stood in the very spot where Mike had left her turning the box in her hands, when, accidentally, she touched the spring and

the lid flew open. To glance at the contents was an act so natural and involuntary as to anticipate reflection.

Nothing was visible but a piece of white paper, neatly folded and compressed into the box in a way to fill its interior. "Bob has written," thought Maud; "yet how could he do this?—he was in the dark, and had not pen or paper." Another look rendered this conjecture still more improbable, as it showed the gilt edge of paper of the quality used for notes, an article equally unlikely to be found in the mill and in his own pocket. "Yet it must be a note," passed through her mind, "and of course it was written before he left the Hut; quite likely before he arrived; possibly, the year before, when he spoke of the box as containing the evidence of the great secret of his life."

Maud now wished for Mike, incoherent, unintelligible, and blundering as he was, that she might question him still further as to the precise words of the message. "Possibly, Bob did not intend me to open the box at all," she thought, "and meant merely that I should keep it until

he could return to claim it. It contains a great secret; and, because he wishes to keep this secret from the Indians, it does not follow that he intends to reveal it to me. I will shut the box again, and guard his secret as I would one of my own."

This was no sooner *thought* than it was *done*. A pressure of the lid closed it, and Maud heard the snap of the spring with a start. Scarcely was the act performed ere she repented it. "Bob would not have sent the box without some particular object," she went on to imagine; "and had he intended it not to be opened, he would have told as much to O'Hearn. How easy would it have been for him to say, and for Mike to repeat, 'Tell her to keep the box till I ask for it; it contains a secret, and I wish my captors not to learn it.' No, he has sent the box with the design that I should examine its contents. His very life may depend on my doing so; yes, and on my doing so this minute!"

This last notion no sooner glanced athwart our heroine's mind than she began diligently to search for the hidden spring. Perhaps curiosity

had its influence on the eagerness to arrive at the secret, which she now manifested; possibly a tenderer and still more natural feeling lay concealed behind it all. At any rate, her pretty little fingers never were employed more nimbly, and not a part of the exterior of the box escaped its pressure. Still the secret spring eluded her search. The box had two or three bands of richly chased work on each side of the place of opening, and amid these ornaments Maud felt certain that the little projection she sought must lie concealed. To examine these, then, she commenced in a regular and connected manner, resolved that not a single raised point should be neglected. Accident, however, as before, stood her friend; and, at a moment when she least expected it, the lid flew back, once more exposing the paper to view.

Maud had been too seriously alarmed about re-opening the box, to hesitate a moment now as to examining its contents. The paper was removed, and she began to unfold it slowly, a slight tremor passing through her frame as she did so. For a single instant she paused to scent

the delightful and delicate perfume that seemed to render the interior sacred; then her fingers resumed their office. At each instant her eyes expected to meet Robert Willoughby's well-known hand-writing. But the folds of the paper opened on a blank. To Maud's surprise, and for a single exquisitely painful moment, she saw that a lock of hair was all the box contained, besides the paper in which it was enveloped. Her look became anxious, and her face pale; then the eyes brightened, and a blush that might well be likened to the tints with which the approach of dawn illumines the sky, suffused her cheeks as, holding the hair to the light, the long ringlets dropped at length, and she recognised one of those beautiful tresses, of which so many were falling at that very moment in rich profusion around her own lovely face To unloosen her hair from the comb, and to lay the secret of Bob Willoughby by its side, in a way to compare the glossy shades, was the act of only a moment; it sufficed, however, to bring a perfect conviction of the truth. It was a memorial of herself, then, that Robert Willoughby so prized, had so long

guarded with care, and which he called the secret of his life!

It was impossible for Maud not to understand all this. Robert Willoughby loved her; he had taken this mode of telling his passion. He had been on the point of doing this in words the very day before; and now he availed himself of the only means that offered of completing the tale. A flood of tenderness gushed to the heart of Maud as she passed over all this in her mind; and from that moment she ceased to feel shame at the recollection of her own attachment. She might still have shrunk a little from avowing it to her father, and mother, and Beulah; but as to herself, the world, and the object of her affections, she now stood perfectly vindicated in her own eyes.

That was a precious half hour which succeeded. For the moment all present dangers were lost sight of, in the glow of future hopes. Maud's imagination portrayed scenes of happiness, in which domestic duties, Bob beloved, almost worshipped, and her father and mother happy in the felicity of their children, were the prominent

features; while Beulah and little Evert filled the back-ground of the picture in colours of pleasing softness. But these were illusions that could not last for ever, the fearful realities of her situation returning with the greater consciousness of existence. Still, Bob might now be loved, without wounding any of the sensitiveness of her sex's opinions; and dearly, engrossingly, passionately was he rewarded for the manner in which he had thought of letting her know the true state of his heart at a moment when he had so much reason to think only of himself.

It was time for Maud to return to her mother and sister. The box was carefully concealed, leaving the hair in its old envelope, and she hurried to the nursery. On entering the room she found that her father had just preceded her. The captain was grave, more thoughtful than usual; and his wife, accustomed to study his countenance for so much of her happiness, saw at once that something lay heavy on his mind.

"Has anything out of the way happened, Hugh," she asked, "to give you uneasiness?"

Captain Willoughby drew a chair to the side

of that of his wife, seated himself, and took her hand before he answered. Little Evert, who sat on her knee, was played with for a moment, as if to defer a disagreeable duty; not till then did he even speak.

"You know, dearest Wilhelmina," the captain finally commenced, "that there never have been any concealments between us on the score of danger, even when I was a professed soldier, and might be said to carry my life in my hand."

"You have ever found me reasonable, I trust, while feeling like a woman, mindful of my duty as a wife?"

"I have, love; this is the reason I have always dealt with you so frankly."

"We understand each other, Hugh. Now tell me the worst at once."

"I am not certain you will think there is any worst about it, Wilhelmina, as Bob's liberty is the object. I intend to go out myself at the head of all the white men that remain, in order to deliver him from the hands of his enemies. This will leave you for a time, six or seven hours, perhaps, in the Hut, with only the three

blacks as a guard, and with the females. You need have no apprehension of an assault, however, everything indicating a different intention on the part of our enemies; on that score you may set your hearts at rest."

"All my apprehensions and prayers will be for you, my husband. For ourselves we care not."

"This I expected: it is to lessen these very apprehensions that I have come to tell you my whole plan."

Captain Willoughby now related, with some minuteness, the substance of Mike's report, and his own plan, of the last of which we have already given an outline. Everything had been well matured in his mind, and all promised success. The men were apprised of the service on which they were to be employed, and every one of them had manifested the best spirit. They were then busy in equipping themselves: in half an hour they would be ready to march.

To all this Mrs. Willoughby listened like a soldier's wife, accustomed to the risks of a frontier warfare, though she felt like a woman. Beu-

lah pressed little Evert to her heart, while her pallid countenance was turned to her father with a look that seemed to devour every syllable. As for Maud, a strange mixture of dread and wild delight were blended in her bosom. To have Bob liberated, and restored to them, was approaching perfect happiness, though it surpassed her powers not to dread misfortunes. Nevertheless, the captain was so clear in his explanations, so calm in his manner, and of a judgment so approved, that his auditors felt far less concern than might naturally have been expected.

CHAPTER V.

March—march—march!
Making sounds as they tread,
Ho-ho! how they step,
Going down to the dead.

COXE.

THE time Maud consumed in her meditations over the box and its contents had been employed by the captain in preparations for his enterprise. Joyce, young Blodget, Jamie, and Mike, led by their commander in person, were to compose the whole force on the occasion; and every man had been busy in getting his arms, ammunition, and provisions ready for the last half hour. When Captain Willoughby, therefore, had taken leave of his family, he found the party in a condition to move.

The first great desideratum was to quit the Hut unseen. Joel and his followers were still at

work in distant fields; but they all carefully avoided that side of the Knoll which would have brought them within reach of the musket, and this left all behind the cliff unobserved, unless Indians were in the woods in that direction. As Mike had so recently passed in by that route, however, the probability was the whole party still remained in the neighbourhood of the mills, where all accounts agreed in saying they mainly kept. It was the intention of the captain, therefore, to sally by the rivulet, and the rear of the house, and to gain the woods, under cover of the bushes on the banks of the former, as had already been done by so many since the inroad.

The great difficulty was to quit the house, and reach the bed of the stream unseen. This step, however, was a good deal facilitated by means of Joel's sally-port, the overseer having taken himself all the precautions against detection of which the case well admitted. Nevertheless, there was the distance between the palisades and the base of the rocks, some forty or fifty yards, which was entirely uncovered, and had to be passed under the notice of any wandering eyes that might happen to

be turned in that quarter. After much reflection the captain and sergeant came to the conclusion to adopt the following mode of proceeding.

Blodget passed the hole by himself, unarmed, rolling down the declivity until he reached the stream. Here a thicket concealed him sufficiently, the bushes extending along the base of the rocks following the curvature of the rivulet. Once within these bushes, there was little danger of detection. As soon as it was ascertained that the young man was beneath the most eastern of the outer windows of the northern wing, the only one of the entire range that had bushes directly under it, all the rifles were lowered down to him two at a time, care being had that no one should appear at the window during the operation. This was easily effected, jerks of the rope sufficing for the necessary signals when to haul in the line. The ammunition succeeded; and in this manner all the materials of offence and defence were soon collected on the margin of the stream.

The next step was to send the men out one by one, imitating the precautions taken by Blodget. Each individual had his own provisions, and most

of the men carried some sort of arms, such as a pistol, or a knife, about his person. In half an hour the four men were armed, and waited for the leader, concealed by the bushes on the border of the brook. It only remained for Captain Willoughby to give some instructions to those he left in the Hut, and to follow.

Pliny the elder, in virtue of his years, and some experience in Indian warfare, succeeded to the command of the garrison in the absence of its chief. Had there remained a male white at the Knoll, this trust never could have devolved on him, it being thought contrary to the laws of nature for a negro to command one of the other colour; but such was not the fact, and Pliny the elder succeeded pretty much as a matter of course. Notwithstanding, he was to obey not only his particular *old* mistress, but both his *young* mistresses, who exercised an authority over him that was not to be disputed, without doing violence to all the received notions of the day. To him, then, the captain issued his final orders, bidding him be vigilant, and, above all, to keep the gates closed.

As soon as this was done, the husband and

father went to his wife and children, to take a last embrace. Anxious not to excite too strong apprehensions by his manner, this was done affectionately, solemnly, perhaps, but with a manner so guarded as to effect his object.

"I shall look for no other signal, or sign of success, Hugh," said the weeping wife, "than your own return, accompanied by our dearest boy. When I can hold you both in my arms, I shall be happy, though all the Indians of the continent were in the valley."

"Do not miscalculate as to time, Wilhelmina. That affectionate heart of yours sometimes travels over time and space in a way to give its owner unnecessary pain. Remember, we shall have to proceed with great caution, both in going and returning; and it will require hours to make the *détour* I have in view. I hope to see you again before sunset, but a delay may carry us into the night. It may even become necessary to defer the final push until after dark."

This was melancholy intelligence for the females; but they listened to it with calmness, and endeavoured to be, as well as to seem, resigned.

Beulah received her father's kiss and blessing with streaming eyes, straining little Evert to her heart as he left her. Maud was the last embraced. He even led her, by gentle violence, to the court, keeping her in discourse by the way, exhorting her to support her mother's spirits by her own sense and steadiness.

"I shall have Bob in the Hut soon," he added, "and this will repay us all for more than twice the risks—all but you, little vixen; for your mother tells me you are getting, through some caprice of that variable humour of your sex, to be a little estranged from the poor fellow."

"Father!"

"Oh! I know it is not very serious; still, even Beulah tells me you once called him a Major of Foot."

"Did I?" said Maud, trembling in her whole frame lest her secret had been prematurely betrayed by the very attempt to conceal it. "My tongue is not always my heart."

"I know it, darling, unless where I am concerned. Treat the son as you will, Maud, I am

certain that you will always love the father." A pressure to the heart, and kisses on the forehead, eyes, and cheeks followed. "You have all your own papers, Maud, and can easily understand your own affairs. When examined into, it will be seen that every shilling of your fortune has gone to increase it; and, little hussy, you are now become something like a great heiress."

"What does this mean, dearest, dearest father? Your words frighten me!"

"They should not, love. Danger is never increased by being prepared to meet it. I have been a steward, and wish it to be known that the duty has not been unfaithfully discharged. That is all. A hundred-fold am I repaid by possessing so dutiful and sweet a child."

Maud fell on her father's bosom and sobbed. Never before had he made so plain allusions to the true relations which existed between them; the papers she possessed having spoken for themselves, and having been given in silence. Nevertheless, as he appeared disposed to proceed no further at present, the poor girl struggled to command herself, succeeded in part, rose, received

her father's benediction, most solemnly and tenderly delivered, and saw him depart with an air of calmness that subsequently astonished even herself.

We must now quit the interesting group that was left behind in the Hut, and accompany the adventurers in their march.

Captain Willoughby was obliged to imitate his men in the mode of quitting the palisades. He had dressed himself in the American hunting-shirt and trowsers for the occasion; and, this being an attire he now rarely used, it greatly diminished the chances of his being recognised if seen. Joyce was in a similar garb, though neither Jamie nor Mike could ever be persuaded to assume a style that both insisted so much resembled that of the Indians. As for Blodget, he was in the usual dress of a labourer.

As soon as he had reached the bottom of the cliff, the captain let the fact be known to old Pliny, by using his voice with caution, though sufficiently loud to be heard on the staging of the roof directly above his head. The black had been instructed to watch Joel and his compa-

nions, in order to ascertain if they betrayed in their movements any consciousness of what was in progress at the Hut. The report was favourable; Pliny assuring his master that "all 'e men work, sir, just as afore. Joel hammer away at plough-handle, tinkerin' just like heself. Not an eye turn dis away, massa."

Encouraged by this assurance, the whole party stole through the bushes that lined this part of the base of the cliffs, until they entered the bed of the stream. It was September, and the water was so low as to enable the party to move along the margin of the rivulet dryshod, occasionally stepping from stone to stone. The latter expedient, indeed, was adopted wherever circumstances allowed, with a view to leaving as few traces of a trail as was practicable. Otherwise the cover was complete; the winding of the rivulet preventing any distant view through its little reaches, and the thick fringe of the bushes on each bank effectually concealing the men against any passing lateral glimpse of their movements.

Captain Willoughby had from the first apprehended an assault from this quarter. The house

in its elevation, however, possessed an advantage that would not be enjoyed by an enemy on the ground; and, then, the cliff offered very serious obstacles to anything like a surprise on that portion of the defences. Notwithstanding, he now led his men, keeping a look riveted on the narrow lane in his front, far from certain that each turn might not bring him in presence of an advancing party of the enemy. No such unpleasant encounter occurred; and the margin of the forest was gained without any appearance of the foe, and seemingly without discovery.

Just within the cover of the woods a short reach of the rivulet lay fairly in sight, from the rear wing of the dwellings. It formed a beautiful object in the view; the ardent and tasteful Maud having sketched the silvery riband of water, as it was seen retiring within the recesses of the forest, and often calling upon others to admire its loveliness and picturesque effect. Here the captain halted, and made a signal to old Pliny to let him know he waited for an answer. The reply was favourable, the negro showing the sign that all was still well. This was no sooner done than the

faithful old black hurried down to his mistress, to communicate the intelligence that the party was safely in the forest; while the adventurers turned, ascended the bank of the stream, and pursued their way on more solid ground,

Captain Willoughby and his men were now fairly engaged in the expedition, and every soul of them felt the importance and gravity of the duty he was on. Even Mike was fain to obey the order to be silent, as the sound of a voice, indiscreetly used, might betray the passage of the party to some outlying scouts of the enemy. Caution was even used in treading on dried sticks, lest their cracking should produce the same effect.

The sound of the axe was heard in the rear of the cabins, coming from a piece of woodland the captain had ordered to be cleared, with the double view of obtaining fuel and of increasing his orchards. This little clearing was near a quarter of a mile from the flats, the plan being still to retain a belt of forest round the latter; and it might have covered half-a-dozen acres of land, having now been used four or five years for the same

purpose. To pass between this clearing and the cabins would have been too hazardous, and it became necessary to direct the march in a way to turn the former.

The cow-paths answered as guides for quite a mile, Mike being thoroughly acquainted with all their sinuosities. The captain and sergeant, however, each carried a pocket compass, an instrument without which few ventured far into the forests. Then the blows of the axes served as sounds to let the adventurers know their relative position, and, as they circled the place whence they issued, they gave the constant assurance of their own progress, and probable security.

The reader will probably comprehend the nature of the ground over which our party was now marching. The "flats" proper, or the site of the old Beaver Dam, have already been described. The valley, towards the south, terminated at the rocks of the mill, changing its character below that point to a glen, or vast ravine. On the east were mountains of considerable height, and of unlimited range; to the north, the level land extended miles, though on a platform many feet

higher than the level of the cleared meadows; while to the west, along the route the adventurers were marching, broad slopes of rolling forest spread their richly-wooded surfaces, filled with fair promise for the future. The highest swell of this undulating forest was that nearest to the Hut, and it was its elevation only that gave the home-scene the character of a valley.

Captain Willoughby's object was to gain the summit of this first ridge of land, which would serve as a guide to his object, since it terminated at the line of rocks that made the waterfall, quite a mile, however, in the rear of the mills. It would carry him also quite beyond the clearing of the wood-choppers, and be effectually turning the whole of the enemy's position. Once at the precipitous termination caused by the face of rock that had been thrown to the surface by some geological phenomenon, he could not miss his way, since these rugged marks must of themselves lead him directly to the station known to be occupied by the body of his foes.

Half an hour served to reach the desired ridge, when the party changed its march, pur-

suing a direction nearly south, along its summit.

"Those axes sound nearer and nearer, sergeant," Captain Willoughby observed, after the march had lasted a long time in profound silence. "We must be coming up near the point where the men are at work."

"Does your honour reflect at all on the reason why these fellows are so particularly industrious in a time like this? To me it has a very ambuscadish sort of look!"

"It cannot be connected with an ambuscade, Joyce, inasmuch as we are not supposed to be on a march. There can be no ambuscade, you will remember, practised on a garrison."

"I ask your honour's pardon—may not a sortie be ambushed as well as a march?"

"In that sense, perhaps, you may be right. And, now you mention it, I think it odd there should be so much industry at wood-chopping in a moment like this. We will halt as soon as the sounds are fairly a-breast of us, when you and I can reconnoitre the men, and ascertain the appearance of things for ourselves."

"I remember, sir, when your honour led out two companies of ours, with one of the Royal Irish, a major's command, of good rights, to observe the left flank of the French the evening before we stormed the enemy's works at Ty—"

"Your memory is beginning to fail you, Joyce," interrupted the captain smiling. "We were far from storming those works, having lost two thousand men before them; and failed of seeing their inside at all."

"I always look upon a soldierly attempt, your honour, the same as a thing that is done. A more gallant stand than we made I never witnessed; and, though we were driven back, I will allow, yet I call that assault as good as storming!"

"Well, have it your own way, Joyce. The morning before your storming I remember to have led out three companies; though it was more in advance, than on either flank. The object was to unmask a suspected ambush."

"That 's just what I wanted to be at, your honour. The general sent you, as an old captain, with three companies, to spring the trap, before he should put his own foot into it."

"He certainly did, and the movement had the desired effect."

"Better and better, sir. I remember we were fired on, and lost some ten or fifteen men, but I would not presume to say whether the march succeeded or not; for nothing was said of the affair next day, in general orders, sir—"

"Next day we had other matters to occupy our minds. It was a bloody and a mournful occasion for England and her colonies."

"Well, your honour, that does not affect our movement, which, you say yourself, was useful."

"Very true, Joyce, though the great calamity of the succeeding day prevented the little success of the preceding morning from being mentioned in general orders. But to what does all this tend,—as I know it must lead to something?"

"It was merely meant as a respectful hint, your honour, that the inferior should be sent out now, according to our own ancient rules, to reconn'itre the clearing, while the commander-in-chief remain with the main body, to cover the retreat."

"I thank you, sergeant, and shall not fail to

employ you on all proper occasions. At present it is my intention that we go together, leaving the men to take breath, in a suitable cover."

This satisfied Joyce, who was content to wait for orders. As soon as the sounds of the axes showed that the party were far enough in advance, and the formation of the land assured the captain that he was precisely where he wished to be, the men were halted, and left secreted in a cover made by the top of a fallen tree. This precaution was taken lest any wandering savage might get a glimpse of their persons, if they stood lounging about in the more open forest during the captain's absence.

This disposition made, the captain and sergeant, first examining the priming of their pieces, moved with the necessary caution towards the edge of the wood-choppers' clearing. The axe was a sufficient guide, and ere they had proceeded far the light began to shine through the trees, proof in itself that they were approaching an opening in the forest.

"Let us incline to the left, your honour," said Joyce, respectfully; "there is a naked rock

hereabouts that completely overlooks the clearing, and where we can even get a peep at the Hut. I have often sat on it when out with the gun, and wearied; for the next thing to being at home, is to see home."

"I remember the place, sergeant, and like your suggestion," answered the captain, with an eagerness that it was very unusual for him to betray. "I could march with a lighter heart, after getting another look at the Knoll, and being certain of its security."

The parties being both of a mind, it is not surprising that each looked eagerly for the spot in question. It was an isolated rock that rose some fifteen or twenty feet above the surface of the ground, having a width and depth about double its height—one of those common excrescences of the forest that usually possess interest for no one but the geologist. Such an object was not difficult to find in an open wood, and the search was soon rewarded by a discovery. Bending their steps that way, our two soldiers were quickly at its base. As is usual, the summit of this fragment of rock was covered with bushes,

others shooting out also from the rich, warm earth at its base, or, to speak more properly, at its junction with the earth.

Joyce ascended first, leaving his rifle in the captain's charge. The latter followed, after having passed up his own and his companion's arms; neither being disposed to stir without having these important auxiliaries at command. Once on the rock, both moved cautiously to its eastern brow, care being had not to go beyond the cover. Here they stood, side by side, gazing on the scene that was outspread before them through openings in the bushes.

To the captain's astonishment, he found himself within half musket shot of the bulk of the hostile party. A regular bivouac had been formed round a spring in the centre of the clearing, and bodies of trees had been thrown together, so as to form a species of work which was rudely but effectually abbatied by the branches. In a word, one of those strong, rough forest encampments had been made, which are so difficult to carry without artillery, more especially if well defended. By being placed in the centre of the

clearing, an assault could not be made without exposing the assailants, and the spring always assured to the garrison the great requisite, water.

There was a method and order in this arrangement that surprised both our old soldiers. That Indians had resorted to this expedient, neither believed; nor would the careless, untaught and inexperienced whites of the Mohawk be apt to adopt it without a suggestion from some person acquainted with the usages of frontier warfare. Such persons were not difficult to find, it is true; and it was a proof that those claiming to be in authority, rightfully or not, were present.

There was something unlooked-for also in the manner in which the party of strangers were lounging about, at a moment like that, seemingly doing nothing, or preparing for no service. Joyce, who was a man of method, and was accustomed to telling off troops, counted no less than forty-nine of these idlers, most of whom were lounging near the log entrenchment, though a few were sauntering about the clearing, conversing with the wood-choppers, or making their

observations listlessly, and seemingly without any precise object in view.

"This is the most extr'or'nary sight, for a military expedition, I have ever seen, your honour," whispered Joyce, after the two had stood examining the position for quite a minute in silence. "A tolerable good log breast-work, I will allow, sir, and men enough to make it good against a sharp assault; but nothing like a guard, and not so much as a single sentinel. This is an affront to the art, Captain Willoughby; and it is such an affront to us, that I feel certain we might carry the post by surprise, if all felt the insult as I do myself."

"This is no time for rash acts or excited feelings, Joyce. Though, were my gallant boy with us, I do think we might make a push at these fellows, with very reasonable chances of success."

"Yes, your honour, and without him, too. A close fire, three cheers, and a vigorous charge, would drive every one of the rascals into the woods!"

"Where they would rally, become the assailants in their turn, surround us, and either compel us to surrender or starve us out. At all events, nothing of the sort must be undertaken until we have carried out the plan for the rescue of Major Willoughby. My hopes of success are greatly increased since I find the enemy has his principal post up here, where he must be a long half-mile from the mill, even in a straight line. You have counted the enemy?"

"There are just forty-nine of them in sight, and I should think some eight or ten more sleeping about under the logs, as I occasionally discover a new one raising his head. Look, sir, does your honour see that manœuvre?"

"Do I see what, sergeant? There is no visible change that I discover."

"Only an Indian chopping wood, Captain Willoughby, which is some such miracle as a white man painting."

The reader will have understood that all the hostile party that was lounging about this clearing were in Indian guise, with faces and hands of the well-known reddish colour that marks the

American aborigines. The two soldiers could discover many evidences that there was deception in these appearances, though they thought it quite probable that real red men were mingled with the pale-faces. But, so little did the invaders respect the necessity of appearances in their present position, that one of these seeming savages had actually mounted a log, taken the axe from the hands of its owner, and begun to chop, with a vigour and skill that soon threw off chips in a way that no man can successfully imitate but the expert axeman of the American interior.

"Pretty well that, sir, for a red-skin," said Joyce, smiling. "If there isn't white blood, ay, and Yankee blood in that chap's arm, I'll give him some of my own to help colour it. Step this way, your honour—only a foot or two—there, sir; by looking through the opening just above the spot where that very make-believe Injin is scattering his chips as if they were so many kernels of corn that he was tossing to the chickens, you will get a sight of the Hut."

The fact was so. By altering his own position

a little on the rock, Captain Willoughby got a full view of the entire buildings of the Knoll. It is true he could not see the lawn without the works, nor quite all of the stockade, but the whole of the western wing, or an entire side-view of the dwellings, was obtained. Everything seemed as tranquil and secure, in and around them, as if they vegetated in a sabbath in the wilderness. There was something imposing even in the solemn silence of their air, and the captain now saw that if he had been struck, and rendered uneasy by the mystery that accompanied the inaction and quiet of his invaders, they, in their turns, might experience some such sensations as they gazed on the repose of the Hut, and the apparent security of its garrison. But for Joel's desertion, indeed, and the information he had carried with him, there could be little doubt that the stranger must have felt the influence of such doubts to a very material extent. Alas! as things were, it was not probable they could be long imposed on by any seeming calm.

Captain Willoughby felt a reluctance to tear

himself away from the spectacle of that dwelling which contained so many that were dear to him. Even Joyce gazed at the house with pleasure, for it had been his quarters, now, so many years, and he had looked forward to the time when he should breathe his last in it. Connected with his old commander by a tie that was inseparable, so far as human wishes could control human events, it was impossible that the sergeant could go from the place where they had left so many precious beings almost in the keeping of Providence, at a moment like that, altogether without emotion. While each was thus occupied in mind there was a perfect stillness. The men of the party had been so far drilled as to speak in low voices, and nothing they said was audible on the rock. The axes alone broke the silence of the woods, and to ears so accustomed to their blows they offered no intrusion. In the midst of this eloquent calm the bushes of the rock rustled, as it might be with the passage of a squirrel or a serpent. Of the last the country had but few, and they of the most innocent kind, while the former abounded. Captain Willoughby turned,

expecting to see one of these little restless beings, when his gaze encountered a swarthy face, and two glowing eyes, almost within reach of his arm. That this was a real Indian was beyond dispute, and the crisis admitting of no delay, the old officer drew a dirk, and had already raised his arm to strike, when Joyce arrested the blow.

"This is Nick, your honour," said the sergeant inquiringly; "is he friend or foe?"

"What says he himself?" answered the captain, lowering his hand in doubt. "Let him speak to his own character."

Nick now advanced, and stood calmly and fearlessly at the side of the two white men. Still there was ferocity in his look, and an indecision in his movements. He certainly might betray the adventurers at any instant, and they felt all the insecurity of their situation. But accident had brought Nick directly in front of the opening through which was obtained the view of the Hut. In turning from one to the other of the two soldiers, his quick eye took in this glimpse of the buildings, and it became riveted there as by the

charm of fascination. Gradually the ferocity left his countenance, which grew human and soft.

"Squaw in wigwam," said the Tuscarora, throwing forward a hand with its forefinger pointing towards the house. "Ole squaw—young squaw. Good. Wyandotté sick, she cure him. Blood in Injin body; thick blood—nebber forget good—nebber forget bad."

CHAPTER VI.

Every stride, every stamp,
  Every footfall is bolder;
'Tis a skeleton's tramp,
  With a skull on its shoulder!
But ho, how he steps
  With a high-tossing head,
That clay-covered bone,
  Going down to the dead!

COXE.

NICK's countenance was a fair index to his mind; nor were his words intended to deceive. Never did Wyandotté forget the good, or evil that was done him. After looking intently a short time at the Hut, he turned, and abruptly demanded of his companions—

"Why come here? Like to see enemy between you and wigwam?"

As all Nick said was uttered in a guarded tone, as if he fully entered into the necessity of remain-

ing concealed from those who were in such a dangerous vicinity, it served to inspire confidence, inducing the two soldiers to believe him disposed to serve them.

"Am I to trust in you as a friend?" demanded the captain, looking the Indian steadily in the eye.

"Why won't trust? Nick no hero—gone away—Nick nebber come ag'in—Wyandotté hero—who no trust Wyandotté? Yengeese always trust great chief."

"I shall take you at your word, Wyandotté, and tell you everything, hoping to make an ally of you. But, first explain to me why you left the Hut last night—friends do not desert friends."

"Why leave wigwam? Because wanted to. Wyandotté come when he want; go when he want. Nick go too. Went to see sor—come back; tell story, eh?"

"Yes, it has happened much as you say, and I am willing to think it all occurred with the best motives. Can you tell me anything of Joel, and the others who have left me?"

"Why tell? Cap'in look; he see. Some chop—some plough—some weed—some dig ditch. All like ole time. Bury hatchet—tired of war-path—why cap'in ask?"

"I see all you tell me. You know, then, that those fellows have made friends with the hostile party?"

"No need know—see. Look—Injin chop, pale-face look on! Call that war?"

"I do see that which satisfies me the men in paint yonder are not all red men."

"No—cap'in right—tell him so at wigwam. But dat Mohawk—dog—rascal—Nick's enemy!"

This was said with a gleam of fierceness shooting across the swarthy face, and a menacing gesture of the hand in the direction of a real savage, who was standing indolently leaning against a tree, at a distance so small as to allow those on the rock to distinguish his features. The vacant expression of this man's countenance plainly denoted that he was totally unconscious of the vicinity of danger. It expressed the listless vacancy of an Indian in a state of perfect rest, his stomach full, his body at ease. His mind peaceful.

"I thought Nick was not here," the captain quietly observed, smiling on the Tuscarora a little ironically.

"Cap'in right—Nick no here. Well for dog 'tis so. Too mean for Wyandotté to touch. What cap'in come for? Eh! Better tell chief —get council widout lightin' fire."

"As I see no use in concealing my plan from you, Wyandotté,"—Nick seemed pleased whenever this name was pronounced by others,—"I shall tell it you freely. Still, you have more to relate to me. Why are *you* here? And how came you to discover us?"

"Follow trail—know cap'in foot—know sergeant foot—know Mike foot—see so many foot, follow him. Leave so many," holding up three fingers, "in bushes—so many," holding up two fingers, "come here. Foot tell *which* come here —Wyandotté chief—he follow chief."

"When did you first strike, or see our trail, Tuscarora?"

"Up here—down yonder—over dere." Captain Willoughby understood this to mean that the Indian had crossed the trail, or seen it in

several places. "Plenty trail; plenty foot to tell all about it. Wyandotté see foot of friend —why he don't follow, eh?"

"I hope this is all so, old warrior, and that you will prove yourself a friend indeed. We are out in the hope of liberating my son, and we came here to see what our enemies are about."

The Tuscarora's eyes were like two inquisitors as he listened; but he seemed satisfied that the truth was told him. Assuming an air of interest, he inquired if the captain knew where the major was confined. A few words explained everything, and the parties soon understood each other.

"Cap'in right," observed Nick. "Son in cupboard still; but plenty warrior near to keep eye on him."

"You know his position, Wyandotté, and can aid us materially, if you will. What say you, chief; will you take service once more under your old commander?"

"Who *he* sarve? King George—Congress—eh?"

"Neither. I am neutral, Tuscarora, in the present quarrel. I only defend myself, and the

rights which the laws assure to me, let whichever party govern that may."

"Dat bad. Nebber neutral in hot war. Get rob from bot' side. Alway be one or t' oder, cap'in."

"You may be right, Nicholas; but a conscientious man may think neither wholly right nor wholly wrong. I wish never to lift the hatchet unless my quarrel be just."

"Injin no understand *dat*. Throw hatchet at *enemy*—what matter what he say—good t'ing, bad t'ing. He *enemy*—dat enough. Take scalp from *enemy*—don't touch *friend*."

"That may do for *your* mode of warfare, Tuscarora, but it will hardly do for *mine*. I must feel that I have right on my side before I am willing to take life."

"Cap'in always talk so, eh? When he soldier and general, say shoot ten, forty, t'ousand Frenchmen, den he say, 'Stop, general—no hurry—let cap'in t'ink.' Bye-'m-by he 'll go and take scalp, eh!"

It exceeded our old soldier's self-command not to permit the blood to rush into his face at this

home-thrust; for he felt the cunning of the Indian had involved him in a seeming contradiction.

"That was when I was in the army, Wyandotté," he answered, notwithstanding his confusion, "when my first and highest duty was to obey the orders of my superiors. Then I acted as a soldier; now, I hope to act as a man."

"Well, Indian chief alway in army. Always high duty, and obey superior — obey Manitou, and take scalp from enemy. War-path alway open, when enemy at t'other end."

"This is no place to discuss such questions, chief, nor have we the time. Do you go with us?"

Nick nodded an assent, and signed for the other to quit the rocks. The captain hesitated a moment, during which he stood intently studying the scene in the clearing.

"What say you, Tuscarora? The sergeant has proposed assaulting that breastwork."

"No good, cap'in. You fire, halloo, rush on —well, kill four, six, two—rest run away. Injin down at mill hear rifle; follow smoke—where

major den? Get major first—tink about enemy afterwards."

As Nick said this he repeated the gesture to descend, and he was obeyed in silence. The captain now led the way back to his party, and soon rejoined it. All were glad to see Nick, for he was known to have a sure rifle, to be fearless as the turkey-cock, and to possess a sagacity in the woods that frequently amounted to a species of intuition.

"Who lead, cap'in or Injin?" asked the Tuscarora in his sententious manner.

"Och, Nick, ye're a cr'atur!" muttered Mike. "Divil bur-r-rn me, Jamie, but I t'inks the fallie would crass the very three-tops rather than miss the majjor's habitation."

"Not a syllable must be uttered," said the captain, raising a hand in remonstrance. "I will lead, and Wyandotté will march by my side, and give me his counsel, in whispers. Joyce will bring up the rear. Blodget, you will keep a sharp look-out to the left, while Jamie will do the same to the right. As we approach the mills stragglers may be met in the woods, and our

march must be conducted with the greatest caution. Now follow, and be silent."

The captain and Nick led, and the whole party followed, observing the silence which had been enjoined on them. The usual manner of marching on a war-path in the woods, was for the men to follow each other singly; an order that has obtained the name of "Indian file," the object being to diminish the trail, and conceal the force of the expedition, by each man treading in his leader's footsteps. On the present occasion, however, the captain induced Nick to walk at his side, feeling an uneasiness on the subject of the Tuscarora's fidelity that he could not entirely conquer. The pretext given was very different, as the reader will suppose. By seeing the print of a moccasin in company with that of a boot, any straggler that crossed the trail might be led to suppose it had been left by the passage of a party from the clearing or the mill. Nick quietly assented to this reasoning, and fell in by the side of the captain without remonstrance.

Vigilant eyes were kept on all sides of the line of march, though it was hoped and believed

that the adventurers had struck upon a route too far west to be exposed to interruption. A quarter of a mile nearer to the flats might have brought them within the range of stragglers, but, following the summit of the ridge, there was a certain security in the indolence which would be apt to prevent mere idlers from sauntering up an ascent. At all events, no interruption occurred, the party reaching in safety the rocks that were a continuation of the range which formed the precipice at the falls — the sign that they had gone far enough to the south. At this period the precipice was nearly lost in the rising of the lower land, but its margin was sufficiently distinct to form a good mask.

Descending to the plateau beneath, the captain and Nick now inclined to the east, the intention being to come in upon the mills from the rear. As the buildings lay in the ravine, this could only be done by making a rapid descent immediately in their vicinity; a formation of the ground that rendered the march, until within pistol-shot of its termination, reasonably secure. Nick also assured his companions that he had several times

traversed this very plateau, and that he had met no signs of footsteps on it; from which he inferred that the invaders had not taken the trouble to ascend the rugged cliffs that bounded the western side of the glen.

The approach to the summit of the cliff was made with caution, though the left flank of the adventurers was well protected by the abrupt descent they had already made from the terrace above. This left little more than the right flank and the front to be watched, the falling away of the land forming, also, a species of cover for the rear. It is not surprising then, that the verge of the ravine or glen was attained, and no discovery was made. The spot being favourable, the captain immediately led down a winding path, that was densely fringed with bushes towards the level of the buildings.

The glen of the mills was very narrow, so much so as barely to leave sites for the buildings themselves, and three or four cabins for the workmen. The mills were placed in advance, as near as possible to the course of the water, while the habitations of the workmen were perched on

shelves of the rocks, or such level bits of bottom-land as offered. Owing to this last circumstance the house of Daniel the miller, or that in which it was supposed the major was still confined, stood by itself, and, fortunately, at the very foot of the path by which the adventurers were descending. All this was favourable, and had been taken into the account as a material advantage by Captain Willoughby when he originally conceived the plan of the present sortie.

When the chimney of the cabin was visible over the bushes Captain Willoughby halted his party, and repeated his instructions to Joyce, in a voice very little raised above a whisper. The sergeant was ordered to remain in his present position until he received a signal to advance. As for the captain himself, he intended to descend as near as might be to the buttery of the cabin, and reconnoitre, before he gave the final order. This buttery was in a lean-to, as a small addition to the original building was called in the parlance of the country; and the object being shade and coolness, on account of the milk with which it was usually well stored at this season of

the year, it projected back to the very cliff, where it was half hid in bushes and young trees. It had but a single small window, that was barred with wood to keep out cats, and such wild vermin as affected milk, nor was it either lathed or plastered; these two last being luxuries not often known in the log tenements of the frontier. Still it was of solid logs, chincked in with mortar, and made a very effectual prison, with the door properly guarded; the captive being deprived of edged tools. All this was also known to the father, when he set forth to effect the liberation of his son, and, like the positions of the buildings themselves, had been well weighed in his estimate of the probabilities and chances.

As soon as his orders were given, Captain Willoughby proceeded down the path, accompanied only by Nick. He had announced his intention to send the Tuscarora ahead to reconnoitre, then to force himself among the bushes between the lean-to and the rocks, and there to open a communication with the major through the chinks of the logs. After receiving Nick's in-

telligence, his plan was to be governed by circumstances, and to act accordingly.

"God bless you, Joyce," said the captain, squeezing the sergeant's hand as he was on the point of descending. "We are on ticklish service, and require all our wits about us. If anything happen to me, remember that my wife and daughter will mainly depend on you for protection."

"I shall consider that as your honour's orders, sir, and no more need be said to me, Captain Willoughby."

The captain smiled on his old follower, and Joyce thought that never had he seen the fine manly face of his superior beam with a calmer or sweeter expression than it did as he returned his own pressure of the hand. The two adventurers were both careful, and their descent was noiseless. The men above listened, in breathless silence, but the stealthy approach of the cat upon the bird could not have been more still than that of these two experienced warriors.

The place where Joyce was left with the men

might have been fifty feet above the roof of the cabin, and almost perpendicularly over the narrow vacancy that was known to exist between the rocks and the lean-to. Still the bushes and trees were so thick as to prevent the smallest glimpse at objects below, had the shape of the cliff allowed it, while they even intercepted sounds. Joyce fancied, nevertheless, that he heard the rustling bushes as the captain forced his way into the narrow space he was to occupy, and he augured well of the fact, since it proved that no opposition had been encountered. Half an hour of forest silence followed, that was only interrupted by the tumbling of the waters over the natural dam. At the end of that weary period a shout was heard in front of the mills, and the party raised their pieces in a vague apprehension that some discovery had been made that was about to bring on a crisis. Nothing further occurred, however, to confirm this impression, and an occasional burst of laughter, that evidently came from white men, rather served to allay the apprehension. Another half-hour passed, during which no interruption was heard. By this time

Joyce became uneasy, a state of things having arrived for which no provision had been made in his instructions. He was about to leave his command under the charge of Jamie, and descend himself to reconnoitre, when a footstep was heard coming up the path. Nothing but the deep attention and breathless stillness of the men could have rendered the sound of a tread so nearly noiseless audible, but heard it was, at a moment when every sense was wrought up to its greatest powers. Rifles were lowered, in readiness to receive assailants, but each was raised again, as Nick came slowly into view. The Tuscarora was calm in manner, as if no accident had occurred to disconcert the arrangement, though his eyes glanced around him like those of a man who searched for an absent person.

"Where cap'in? — Where major?" Nick asked, as soon as his glance had taken in the faces of all present.

"We must ask that of you, Nick," returned Joyce. "We have not seen the captain, nor had any orders from him, since he left us."

This answer seemed to cause the Indian more

surprise than it was usual for him to betray, and he pondered a moment in obvious uneasiness.

"Can't stay here alway," he muttered. "Best go see. Bye'm-by trouble come; then too late."

The sergeant was greatly averse to moving without orders. He had his instructions how to act in every probable contingency, but none that covered the case of absolute inaction on the part of those below. Nevertheless, twice the time necessary to bring things to issue had gone by, and neither signal, shot, nor alarm had reached his ears.

"Do you know anything of the major, Nick?" the sergeant demanded, determined to examine the case thoroughly ere he came to a decision.

"Major dere—see him at door—plenty sentinel. All good—where cap'in?"

"Where did you leave him? You can give the last account of him."

"Go in behind cupboard—under rock—plenty bushes—all right—son dere."

"This must be looked to—perhaps his honour has fallen into a fit—such things sometimes hap-

pen ; and a man who is fighting for his own child doesn't feel, Jamie, all the same as one who fights on a general principle, as it might be."

"Na—ye 're right, Sairgeant J'yce, and ye 'll be doing the kind and prudent act to gang doon yersal', and investigate the trainsaction with yer ain een."

This Joyce determined to do, directing Nick to accompany him, as a guide. The Indian seemed glad to comply, and there was no delay in proceeding. It required but a minute to reach the narrow passage between the cliff and the lean-to. The bushes were carefully shoved aside, and Joyce entered. He soon caught a glimpse of the hunting-shirt, and then he was about to withdraw, believing that he was in error, in anticipating orders. But a short look at his commander removed all scruples; for he observed that he was seated on a projection of the rocks, with his body bowed forward, apparently leaning on the logs of the building. This seemed to corroborate the thought about a fit, and the sergeant pressed eagerly forward to ascertain the truth.

Joyce touched his commander's arm, but no

sign of consciousness came from the latter. He then raised his body upright, placing the back in a reclining attitude against the rocks, and started back himself when he caught a glimpse of the death-like hue of the face. At first, the notion of the fit was strong with the sergeant, but in changing his own position he caught a glimpse of a little pool of blood, which at once announced that violence had been used.

Although the sergeant was a man of great steadiness of nerves, and unchangeable method, he fairly trembled as he ascertained the serious condition of his old and well-beloved commander. Notwithstanding, he was too much of a soldier to neglect anything that circumstances required. On examination, he discovered a deep and fatal wound between two of the ribs, which had evidently been inflicted with a common knife. The blow had passed into the heart, and Captain Willoughby was, out of all question, dead! He had breathed his last within six feet of his own gallant son, who, ignorant of all that passed, was little dreaming of the proximity of one so dear to him, as well as of his dire condition.

Joyce was a man of powerful frame, and at that moment he felt he was master of a giant's strength. First assuring himself of the fact that the wounded man had certainly ceased to breathe, he brought the arms over his own shoulders, raised the body on his back, and walked from the place, with less attention to caution than on entering, but with sufficient care to prevent exposure. Nick stood watching his movements with a wondering look, and as soon as there was room, he aided in supporting the corpse.

In this manner the two went up the path, bearing their senseless burden. A gesture directed the party with Jamie to precede the two who had been below, and the sergeant did not pause even to breathe until he had fairly reached the summit of the cliff; then he halted in a place removed from the danger of immediate discovery. The body was laid reverently on the ground, and Joyce renewed his examination with greater ease and accuracy, until perfectly satisfied that the captain must have ceased to breathe, nearly an hour.

This was a sad and fearful blow to the whole party. No one, at such a moment, thought of

inquiring into the manner in which their excellent master had received his death-blow; but every thought was bent either on the extent of the calamity, or on the means of getting back to the Hut. Joyce was the soul of the party. His rugged face assumed a stern, commanding expression; but every sign of weakness had disappeared. He gave his orders promptly, and the men even started when he spoke, so bent on obtaining obedience did he appear to be.

The rifles were converted into a bier, the body was placed upon it, and the four men then raised the burthen, and began to retrace their footsteps in melancholy silence. Nick led the way, pointing out the difficulties of the path with a sedulousness of attention and a gentleness of manner that none present had ever before witnessed in the Tuscarora. He even appeared to have become woman, to use one of his own peculiar expressions.

No one speaking, and all the men working with good will, the retreat, notwithstanding the burthen with which it was encumbered, was made with a rapidity greatly exceeding the advance.

Nick led the way with an unerring eye, even selecting better ground than that which the white men had been able to find on their march. He had often traversed all the hills in the character of a hunter, and to him the avenues of the forest were as familiar as the streets of his native town become to the burgher. He made no offer to become one of the bearers; this would have been opposed to his habits; but in all else the Indian manifested gentleness and solicitude. His apprehension seemed to be, and so he expressed it, that the Mohawks might get the scalp of the dead man; a disgrace that he seemed as solicitous to avoid as Joyce himself; the sergeant, however, keeping in view the feelings of the survivors, rather than any notions of military pride.

Notwithstanding the stern resolution that prevailed among the men, that return march was long and weary. The distance of itself exceeded two miles, and there were the inequalities and obstacles of a forest to oppose them. Perseverance and strength, however, overcame all difficulties, and at the end of two hours the party approached the point where it became necessary

to enter the bed of the rivulet, or expose their sad procession by marching in open view of any who might be straggling in the rear of the Hut. A species of desperate determination had influenced the men in their return march, rendering them reckless of discovery or its consequences, a circumstance that had greatly favoured their object; the adventurous and bold frequently encountering fewer difficulties in the affairs of war than the cautious and timid. But an embarrassment now presented itself that was far more difficult to encounter than any which proceeded from personal risks. The loving family of the deceased was to be met; a wife and daughters apprised of the fearful loss, that in the providence of God had suddenly alighted on their house.

"Lower the body, men, and come to a halt," said Joyce, using the manner of authority, though his voice trembled; "we must consult together as to our next step."

There was a brief and decent pause, while the party placed the lifeless body on the grass, face uppermost, with the limbs laid in order, and

everything about it disposed of in a seemliness that betokened profound respect for the senseless clay, even after the noble spirit had departed. Mike alone could not resist his strong native propensity to talk. The honest fellow raised a hand of his late master, and kissing it with strong affection, soliloquized as follows, in a tone that was more rebuked by feeling than any apprehension of consequences:—

"Little need had ye of a praist, and extreme unction," he said. "The likes of yerself always kapes a clane breast; and the knife that went into yer heart found nothing that ye need have been ashamed of! Sorrow come over me, but yer lass is as great a one to meself as if I had tidings of the sinking of ould Ireland into the salt say itself; a thing that niver *can* happen, and niver will happen; no, not even at the last day, as all agree the wor-r-ld is to be burned and not drowned. And who 'll there be to tell this same to the Missus, and Miss Beuly, and phratty Miss Maud, and the babby, in the bargain? Divil bur-r-n me, if 't will be Michael O'Hearn, who has too much sorrow of his own to be running

about, and d'aling it out to other people. Sargeant, that will be yer own jewty, and I pities the man that has to perform it."

"No man will see me shrink from a duty, O'Hearn," said Joyce stiffly, while with the utmost difficulty he kept the tears from breaking out of a fountain that had not opened, in this way, for twenty years. "It may bear hard on my feelings—I do not say it will *not*—but duty is duty, and it must be done. Corporal Allen, you see the state of things; the commanding officer is among the casualties, and nothing would be simpler than our course, were it not for Madam Willoughby—God bless her, and have her in His holy keeping—and the young ladies. It is proper to deliberate a little about *them*. To you, then, as an elderly and experienced man, I first apply for an opinion."

"Sorrow's an unwelcome guest, whether it comes expected or without any previous knowledge. The hairts o' the widow and fairtherless must be stricken, and it's little that a' our consolations and expairiments will prevail ag'in the feelin's o' natur'. Pheeloosophy and religion tall

us that the body's no mair than a clod o' the valley when the speerit has fled; but the hairt is unapt to listen to wisdom while the grief is fraish, and of the severity of an unlooked-for sairtainty. *I* see little good, therefore, in doing mair than just sending in a messenger to clear the way a little for the arrival of truth, in the form o' death, itsal'."

"I have been thinking of this: will you take the office, Jamie, as a man of years and discretion?"

"Na, na; ye 'll be doing far better by sending a younger man. Age has weakened my memory, and I 'll be overlooking some o' the saircumstances in a manner that will be unseemly for the occasion. Here is Blodget, a youth of ready wit, and limber tongue."

"I wouldn't do it, mason, to be the owner of ten such properties as this!" exclaimed the young Rhode Islander, actually recoiling a step, as if he retreated before a dreaded foe.

"Well, sairgeant, ye 've Michael here, who belangs to a kirk that has so little seempathy with protestantism as to lessen the pain o' the

office. Death is a near ally to religion, and Michael, by taking a religious view of the maither, might bring his hairt into such a condition of insensibility as wad give him little to do but to tell what has happened, leaving God, in his ain maircy, to temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

"You hear, O'Hearn?" said the sergeant, stiffly—"Everybody seems to expect that you will do this duty."

"Jewty! D'ye call it a jewty for a man in my situation to break the hearts of missus, and Miss Beuly, and phratty Miss Maud, and the babby? for babbies has hearts as well as the stoutest man as is going. Divil bur-r-n me, then, if ye gets out of my mout' so much as a hint that the captain's dead and gone from us, for ever and ever, amen! Ye may send me in, for ye're corporals, and sergeants, and the likes of yees, and I 'll obey as a souldier, seein' that he would have wished as much himself, had the breat' staid in his body, which it has not, on account of its l'aving his sowl on 'arth, and departing with his corporeal part for the mansions of happiness, the Blessed Mary have mercy on

him, whether here or *there*—but the captain was not the man to wish a fait'ful follower to afflict his own wife; and so I 'll have not'in' to do with such a message, at all at all."

"Nick go," said the Indian, calmly. "Used to carry message — carry him for cap'in, once more."

"Well, Nick, you may do it certainly, if so disposed," answered Joyce, who would have accepted the services of a Chinese rather than have undertaken the office in person. "You will remember and speak to the ladies gently, and not break the news too suddenly."

"Yes—squaw soft heart—Nick know—had moder—had wife, once—had darter."

"Very well; this will be an advantage, men, as Nick is the only married man among us; and married men should best understand dealing with females."

Joyce then held a private communication with the Tuscarora, that lasted some five or six minutes, when the last leaped nimbly into the bed of the stream, and was soon concealed by the bushes of one of its reaches.

CHAPTER VII.

Heart leaps to heart—the sacred flood
That warms us is the same;
That good old man—his honest blood
Alike we fondly claim.

SPRAGUE.

ALTHOUGH Nick commenced his progress with so much seeming zeal and activity, his speed abated the moment he found himself beyond the sight of those he had left in the woods. Before he reached the foot of the cliff his trot had degenerated to a walk; and when he actually found he was at its base, he seated himself on a stone, apparently to reflect on the course he ought to pursue.

The countenance of the Tuscarora expressed a variety of emotions while he thus remained stationary. At first it was fierce, savage, exulting; then it became gentler, soft, perhaps repentant.

He drew his knife from its buckskin sheath, and eyed the blade with a gaze expressive of uneasiness. Perceiving that a clot of blood had collected at the junction with the handle, it was carefully removed by the use of water. His look next passed over his whole person, in order to ascertain if any more of these betrayers of his fearful secret remained; after which he seemed more at ease.

"Wyandotté's back don't ache now," he growled to himself. "Ole sore heal up. Why cap'in touch him? T'ink Injin no got feelin'? Good man sometime; bad man sometime. Sometime live; sometime die. Why tell Wyandotté he flog ag'n, just as go to enemy's camp? No; back feel well now; nebber smart any more."

When this soliloquy was ended Nick arose, cast a look up at the sun to ascertain how much of the day still remained, glanced towards the Hut, as if examining the nature of its defences, stretched himself like one who was weary, and peeped out from behind the bushes, in order to see how those who were afield still occupied themselves. All this done, with singular deliberation and steadiness he arranged his light dress, and

prepared to present himself before the wife and daughters of the man whom, three hours before, he had remorselessly murdered. Nick had often meditated this treacherous deed during the thirty years which had elapsed between his first flogging and the present period; but circumstances had never placed its execution safely in his power. The subsequent punishments had increased the desire for a few years; but time had so far worn off the craving for revenge that it would never have been actively revived, perhaps, but for the unfortunate allusions of the victim himself to the subject. Captain Willoughby had been an English soldier, of the school of the last century. He was naturally a humane and a just man, but he believed in the military axiom that "the most flogging regiments were the best fighting regiments;" and perhaps he was not in error as regards the lower English character. It was a fatal error, however, to make in relation to an American savage; one who had formerly exercised the functions, and who had not lost all the feelings, of a chief. Unhappily, at a moment when everything depended on the fidelity of the Tuscarora,

the captain had bethought him of his old expedient for insuring prompt obedience, and, by way of a reminder, he made an allusion to his former mode of punishment. As Nick would have expressed it, "the old sores smarted;" the wavering purpose of thirty years was suddenly and fiercely revived, and the knife passed into the heart of the victim with a rapidity that left no time for appeals to the tribunal of God's mercy. In half a minute Captain Willoughby had ceased to breathe.

Such had been the act of the man who now passed through the opening of the palisade, and entered the former habitation of his victim. A profound stillness reigned in and around the Hut, and no one appeared to question the unexpected intruder. Nick passed, with his noiseless step, round to the gate, which he found secured. It was necessary to knock, and this he did in a way effectually to bring a porter.

"Who dere?" demanded the elder Pliny from within.

"Good friend—open gate. Come wid message from cap'in."

The natural distaste to the Indians which existed among the blacks of the Knoll included the Tuscarora. This disgust was mingled with a degree of dread; and it was difficult for beings so untutored and ignorant at all times to draw the proper distinctions between Indian and Indian. In *their* wonder-loving imaginations, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Mohawks, Onondagas, and Iroquois were all jumbled together in inextricable confusion, a red-man being a red-man, and a savage a savage. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pliny the elder should hesitate about opening the gate, and admitting one of the detested race, though a man so well known to them all, in the peculiar situation of the family. Luckily, Great Smash happened to be near, and her husband called her to the gate by one of the signals that was much practised between them.

"Who you t'ink out dere?" asked Pliny the elder of his consort, with a very significant look.

"How you t'ink guess, ole Plin? You s'pose nigger wench like Albonny wise woman, dat she see t'rough a gate, and know ebbery ting, and little more."

"Well, *dat* Sassy Nick. What you say *now?*"

"You sartain, ole Plin?" asked Mistress Smash, with a face ominous of evil.

"Sartain as ear. Talk wid him—he want to come in. What you t'ink?"

"Nebber open gate, ole Plin, till mistress tell you. You stay here,—dere; lean ag'in gate wid all you might,—dere; now I go call Miss Maud: she all alone in librarim, and will know what best. Mind you lean ag'in gate well, ole Plin."

Pliny the elder nodded assent, placed his shoulders resolutely against the massive timbers, and stood propping a defence that would have made a respectable resistance to a battering-ram, like another Atlas upholding a world. His duty was short, however, his "lady" soon returning with Maud, who was hastening breathlessly to learn the news.

"Is it you, Nick?" called out the sweet voice of our heroine through the crevices of the timber.

The Tuscarora started as he so unexpectedly heard those familiar sounds; for an instant his

look was dark, then the expression changed to pity and concern, and his reply was given with less than usual of the abrupt, guttural brevity that belonged to his habits.

"'Tis Nick—Sassy Nick—Wyandotté, Flower of the Woods," for so the Indian often termed Maud. "Got news—cap'in send him. Meet party, and go along. Nobody here, only Wyandotté. Nick see major, too—say somet'ing to young squaw."

This decided the matter: the gate was unbarred, and Nick in the court in half-a-minute. Great Smash stole a glance without, and beckoned Pliny the elder to join her, in order to see the extraordinary spectacle of Joel and his associates toiling in the fields. When they drew in their heads, Maud and her companion were already in the library. The message from Robert Willoughby had induced our heroine to seek this room; for, placing little confidence in the delicacy of the messenger, she recoiled from listening to his words in the presence of others.

But Nick was in no haste to speak; he took the chair to which Maud motioned, and he sate

looking at her in a way that soon excited her alarm.

"Tell me, if your heart has any mercy in it, Wyandotté, has aught happened to Major Willoughby?"

"He well — laugh, talk, feel good; mind not'ing. He prisoner; don't touch he scalp."

"Why, then, do you wear so ominous a look? —your face is the very harbinger of evil."

"Bad news, if trut' must come. What you' name, young squaw?"

"Surely, surely, you must know that well, Nick. I am Maud—your old friend, Maud."

"Pale-face hab two name — Tuscarora got t'ree. Sometime Nick, sometime Sassy Nick, sometime Wyandotté."

"You know my name is Maud Willoughby," returned our heroine, colouring to the temples with a certain secret consciousness of her error, but preferring to keep up old appearances.

"Dat call you' fader's name, Meredit'; no Willoughby."

"Merciful Providence! and has this great secret been known to *you*, too, Nick?"

"He no secret—know all about him. Wyandotté dere. See Major Meredit' shot. *He* good chief—nebber flog—nebber strike Injin. Nick know fader, know moder—know squaw, when pappoose."

"And why have you chosen this particular moment to tell me all this? Has it any relation to your message—to Bob—to Major Willoughby, I mean?" demanded Maud, nearly gasping for breath.

"No relation, tell you," said Nick, a little angrily. "Why make relation, when no relation at all. Meredit'; no Willoughby. Ask moder; ask major; ask chaplain—all tell trut'! No need to be so feelin'; no you fader at all."

"What *can* you—what *do* you mean, Nick? Why do you look so wild—so fierce—so kind—so sorrowful—so angry? You must have bad news to tell me."

"Why bad to *you?* He no fader—only fader friend. You can't help it — fader die when you pappoose — why you care, now, for dis?"

Maud now actually gasped for breath. A

frightful glimpse of the truth gleamed before her imagination, though it was necessarily veiled in the mist of uncertainty. She became pale as death, and pressed her hand upon her heart, as if to still its beating. Then, by a desperate effort, she became more calm, and obtained the power to speak.

"Oh! is it so, Nick?—*can* it be so?" she said; "my father has fallen in this dreadful business?"

"Fader kill twenty year ago; tell you *dat* how often?" answered the Tuscarora angrily; for, in his anxiety to lessen the shock to Maud, for whom this wayward savage had a strange sentiment of affection, that had grown out of her gentle kindnesses to himself on a hundred occasions, he fancied, if she knew that Captain Willoughby was not actually her father, her grief at his loss would be less. "Why you call *dis* fader, when *dat* fader. Nick know fader and moder. Major no broder."

Notwithstanding the sensations that nearly pressed her to the earth, the tell-tale blood rushed to Maud's cheeks again at this allusion

and she bowed her face to her knees. The action gave her time to rally her faculties; and, catching a glimpse of the vast importance to all for her maintaining self-command, she was enabled to raise her face with something like the fortitude the Indian hoped to see.

"Trifle with me no longer, Wyandotté, but let me know the worst at once. Is my father dead? By father, I mean Captain Willoughby."

"Mean wrong, den—no fader, tell you. Why young squaw so much like Mohawk?"

"Man—is Captain Willoughby killed?"

Nick gazed intently into Maud's face for half a minute, and then he nodded an assent. Notwithstanding all her resolutions to be steady, our heroine nearly sank under the blow. For ten minutes she spoke not, but sat, her head bowed to her knees, in a confusion of thought that threatened a temporary loss of reason. Happily, a flood of tears relieved her, and she became more calm. Then the necessity of knowing more, in order that she might act intelligently, occurred to her mind, and she questioned Nick

in a way to elicit all it suited the savage to reveal.

Maud's first impulse was to go out to meet the body of the captain, and to ascertain for herself that there was actually no longer any hope. Nick's account had been so laconic as to leave much obscurity, and the blow had been so sudden, she could hardly credit the truth in its full extent. Still there remained the dreadful tidings to be communicated to those dear beings, who, while they feared so much, had never anticipated a calamity like this. Even Mrs. Willoughby, sensitive as she was, and wrapped up in those she loved so entirely, as she was habitually, had been so long accustomed to see and know of her husband's exposing himself with impunity, as to begin to feel, if not to think, that he bore a charmed life. All this customary confidence was to be overcome, and the truth was to be said. Tell the fact to her mother, Maud felt that she could not then; scarcely, under any circumstances, would she have consented to perform this melancholy office; but, so long as a shadow of doubt remained on the subject of her father's

actual decease, it seemed cruel even to think of it. Her decision was to send for Beulah, and it was done by means of one of the negresses.

So long as we feel that there are others to be sustained by our fortitude, even the feeblest possess a firmness to which they might otherwise be strangers. Maud, contrary to what her delicate but active frame and sweetness of disposition might seem to indicate, was a young woman capable of the boldest exertions, short of taking human life. Her frontier training had raised her above most of the ordinary weaknesses of her sex; and, so far as determination went, few men were capable of higher resolution, when circumstances called for its display. Her plan was now made up to go forth and meet the body, and nothing short of a command from her mother could have stopped her. In this frame of mind was our heroine when Beulah made her appearance.

"Maud!" exclaimed the youthful matron, "what has happened? — why are you so pale? —why send for me? Does Nick bring us any tidings from the mill?"

"The worst possible, Beulah. My father!—my dear, dear father is hurt! They have borne him as far as the edge of the woods, where they have halted, in order not to take us by surprise. I am going to meet the — to meet the men, and to bring father in. You must prepare mother for the sad, sad tidings; — yes, Beulah, for the worst, as everything depends on the wisdom and goodness of God!"

"Oh! Maud, this is dreadful!" exclaimed the sister, sinking into a chair: "what will become of mother,—of little Evert,—of us all!"

"The providence of the Ruler of heaven and earth will care for us. Kiss me, dear sister; how cold you are! Rouse yourself, Beulah, for mother's sake: think how much more *she* must feel than we possibly can, and then be resolute."

"Yes, Maud, very true; no woman can feel like a wife—unless it be a mother—"

Here Beulah's words were stopped by her fainting.

"You see, Smash," said Maud, pointing to her sister with a strange resolution, "she must have air and a little water,—and she has salts

about her, I know. Come, Nick, we have no more time to waste; you must be my guide."

The Tuscarora had been a silent observer of this scene, and if it did not awaken remorse in his bosom, it roused feelings that had never before been its inmates. The sight of two such beings suffering under a blow that his own hand had struck was novel to him; and he knew not which to encourage most, a sentiment allied to regret, or a fierce resentment that any should dare thus to reproach, though it were only by yielding to the grief natural to their situation. But Maud had obtained a command over him that he knew not how to resist, and he followed her from the room, keeping his eyes riveted the while on the pallid face of Beulah. The last was recalled from her insensibility, however, in the course of a few minutes, through the practised attentions of the negresses.

Maud waited for nothing. Motioning impatiently for the Tuscarora to lead the way, she glided after him with a rapidity that equalled his own loping movement. She made no difficulties in passing the stockade, though Nick kept his

eyes on the labourers, and felt assured their *exeunt* was not noticed. Once by the path that led along the rivulet, Maud refused all precautions, but passed swiftly over it, partially concealed by its bushes. Her dress was dark, and left little liability to exposure. As for Nick, his forest attire, like the hunting shirt of the whites, was expressly regulated by the wish to go to and fro unseen.

In less than three minutes after the Indian and Maud had passed the gate, they were drawing near to the melancholy group that had halted in the forest. Our heroine was recognised as she approached; and when she came rushing up to the spot all made way, allowing her to fall upon her knees by the side of the lifeless body, bathing the placid face of the dead with her tears, and covering it with kisses.

"Is there no hope? Oh! Joyce," she cried, "*can* it be possible that my father is actually dead!"

"I fear, Miss Maud, that his honour has made his last march. He has received orders to go hence, and, like a gallant soldier, as he was, he

has obeyed without a murmur," answered the sergeant, endeavouring to appear firm and soldier-like himself. "We have lost a noble and humane commander, and you a most excellent and tender father."

"No fader," growled Nick, at the sergeant's elbow, twitching his sleeve at the same time, to attract attention. "Sergeant know *her* fader: he by,—I by, when Iroquois shoot him."

"I do not understand you, Tuscarora, nor do I think you altogether understand *us*; the less you say, therefore, the better for all parties. It is our duty, Miss Maud, to say 'God's will be done,' and the soldier who dies in the discharge of his duty is never to be pitied. I sincerely wish that the Rev. Mr. Woods was here; he would tell you all this in a manner that would admit of no dispute; as for myself, I am a plain man, Miss Maud, and my tongue cannot utter one half that my heart feels at this instant."

"Ah! Joyce, what a friend—what a parent has it pleased God to call to himself!"

"Yes, Miss Maud, that may be said with great justice: if his honour has left us in obedience

to general orders, it is to meet promotion in a service that will never weary, and never end."

"So kind! so true! so gentle! so just! so affectionate!" said Maud, wringing her hands.

"And so brave, young lady. His honour, Captain Willoughby, wasn't one of them that is always talking, and writing, and boasting about fighting; but when anything was to be *done*, the colonel always knew whom to send on the duty. The army couldn't have lost a braver gentleman, had he remained in it."

"Oh! my father! my father!" cried Maud, in bitterness of sorrow, throwing herself on the body and embracing it, as had been her wont in childhood; "would that I could have died for you!"

"Why you let go on so?" grumbled Nick again. "*No* her fader—you know *dat*, sergeant."

Joyce was not in a state to answer. His own feelings had been kept in subjection only by military pride, but they now had become so nearly uncontrollable, that he found himself obliged to step a little aside in order to conceal his weak-

ness. As it was, large tears trickled down his rugged face, like water flowing from the fissures of the riven oak. Jamie Allen's constitutional prudence, however, now became active, admonishing the party of the necessity of their getting within the protection of the Hut.

"Death is at a' times awfu'," said the mason, "but it must befall young and auld alike. And the affleection it brings cometh fra' the heart, and is a submission to the la' o' nature. Nevertheless we a' hae our duties so lang as we remain in the flesh, and it is time to be thinking o' carryin' the body into some place o' safety, while we hae a prudent regard to our ain conditions also."

Maud had risen, and, hearing this appeal, she drew back meekly, assumed a manner of forced composure, and signed to the men to proceed. On this intimation the body was raised, and the melancholy procession resumed its march.

For the purpose of concealment, Joyce led the way into the bed of the stream, leaving Maud waiting their movements a little deeper within the forest. As soon as he and his fellow-bearers were

in the water, Joyce turned and desired Nick to escort the young lady in again, on dry land, or by the path along which she had come out. This said, the sergeant and his companions proceeded. Maud stood gazing on the sad spectacle like one entranced, until she felt a sleeve pulled, and perceived the Tuscarora at her side.

"No go to Hut," said Nick earnestly; "go wid Wyandotté."

"Not follow my dear father's remains! Not go to my beloved mother in her anguish. You know not what you ask, Indian—move, and let me proceed."

"No go home—no use—no good. Cap'in dead—what do widout commander? Come wid Wyandotté—find major—den do some good."

Maud fairly started in her surprise. There seemed something so truly useful, so consoling, so dear in this proposal, that it instantly caught her ear.

"Find the major!" she answered. "Is that possible, Nick? My poor father perished in making that attempt—what hope can there be then for *my* success?"

"Plenty hope — much as want — all, want. Come wid Wyandotté — he great chief — show young squaw where to find brother."

Here was a touch of Nick's consummate art. He knew the female bosom so well that he avoided any allusion to his knowledge of the real relation between Robert Willoughby and Maud, though he had so recently urged her want of natural affinity to the family as a reason why she should not grieve. By keeping the major before her eyes as a brother, the chances of his own success were greatly increased. As for Maud, a tumult of feeling came over her heart at this extraordinary proposal. To liberate Bob, to lead him into the Hut, to offer his manly protection to her mother, and Beulah, and little Evert, at such an instant, caught her imagination, and appealed to all her affections.

"Can you do this, Tuscarora?" she asked earnestly, pressing her hand on her heart as if to quiet its throbbings. "Can you really lead me to Major Willoughby, so that I may have some hope of liberating him?"

"Sartain — you go, he come. I go, he no

come. Don't love Nick—t'ink all Injin one Injin—t'ink one Injin all Injin. You go, he come—he stay, find more knife, and die like cap'in. Young squaw follow Wyandotté, and see."

Maud needed no more. To save the life of Bob, her well-beloved, he who had so long been beloved in secret, she would have gone with one far less known and trusted than the Tuscarora. She made an eager gesture for him to proceed, and they were soon on their way to the mill, threading the mazes of the forest.

Nick was far from observing the precautions that had been taken by the captain in his unfortunate march out. Acquainted with every inch of ground in the vicinity of the Dam, and an eye-witness of the dispositions of the invaders, he had no occasion for making the long *détour* already described, but went to work in a much more direct manner. Instead of circling the valley, and the clearing, to the westward, he turned short in the contrary direction, crossed the rivulet on the fallen tree, and led the way along the eastern margin of the flats. On this side of

the valley he knew there were no enemies, and the position of the huts and barns enabled him to follow a path that was just deep enough in the forest to conceal his movements. By taking this course, besides having the advantage of a clear and beaten path most of the way, the Tuscarora brought the whole distance within a mile.

As for Maud, she asked no questions, solicited no pauses, manifested no physical weakness. Actively as the Indian moved among the trees, she kept close in his footsteps; and she had scarcely begun to reflect on the real nature of the undertaking in which she was engaged, when the roar of the rivulet, and the formation of the land, told her they had reached the edge of the glen below the mills. Here Nick told her to remain stationary a moment, while he advanced to a covered point of the rocks, to reconnoitre. This was the place where the Indian had made his first observations of the invaders of the valley, ascertaining their real character before he trusted his person among them. On the present occasion, his object was to see if all remained in and about the mills as when he had last left the spot.

"Come," said Nick, signing for Maud to follow him; "we go—fools sleep, and eat, and talk. Major prisoner now; half an hour major free."

This was enough for the ardent, devoted, generous-hearted Maud. She descended the path before her as swiftly as her guide could lead, and in five more minutes they reached the bank of the stream, in the glen, at a point where a curvature hid the rivulet from those at the mill. Here an enormous pine had been laid across the torrent; and, flattened on its upper surface, it made a secure bridge for those who were sure of foot and steady of eye. Nick glanced back at his companion as he stepped upon this bridge, to ascertain if she were equal to crossing it, a single glance sufficing to tell him apprehensions were unnecessary. Half a minute placed both in safety on the western bank.

"Good!" muttered the Indian; "young squaw make wife for warrior."

But Maud regarded neither the compliment nor the expression of countenance which accompanied it. She merely made an impatient gesture to proceed. Nick gazed intently at the excited

girl; and there was an instant when he seemed to waver in his own purpose; but the gesture repeated, caused him to turn, and lead the way up the glen.

The progress of Nick now necessarily became more guarded and slower. He was soon obliged to quit the common path, and to incline to the left, more against the side of the cliff, for the purposes of concealment. From the time he had struck the simple bridge, until he took this precaution, his course had lain along what might have been termed the common highway, on which there was always the danger of meeting some messenger, travelling to or from the valley.

But Nick was at no loss for paths; there were plenty of them, and the one he took soon brought him out into that by which Captain Willoughby had descended to the lean-to. When the spot was reached where Joyce had halted, Nick paused; and, first listening intently, to catch the sound of noises, if any might happen to be in dangerous proximity, he addressed his companion:

"Young squaw bold," he said encouragingly; "now want heart of warrior."

"I can follow, Nick; having come so far, why distrust me now?"

"'Cause he here—down dere—woman love man, man love woman—dat right; but no show it when scalp in danger."

"Perhaps I do not understand you, Tuscarora; but my trust is in God,—he is a support that can uphold any weakness."

"Good!—stay here—Nick come back in minute."

Nick now descended to the passage between the rocks and the lean-to, in order to make certain that the major still remained in his prison, before he incurred any unnecessary risk with Maud. Of this fact he was soon assured, after which he took the precaution to conceal the pool of blood, by covering it with earth and stones. Making his other observations with care, and placing the saw and chisel, with the other tools that had fallen from the captain's hand when he received his death wound, in a position to be handy, he ascended the path and rejoined Maud.

No word passed between our heroine and her guide. The latter motioned for her to follow; then he led the way down to the cabin. Soon both had entered the narrow passage, and Maud, in obedience to a sign from her companion, seated herself on the precise spot where her father had been found, and where the knife had passed into his heart. To all this, however, Nick manifested the utmost indifference. Everything like ferocity had left his face; to use his own figurative language, his sores smarted no longer, and the expression of his eye was friendly and gentle; still it showed no signs of compunction.

CHAPTER VIII.

Her pallid face display'd
Something, methought, surpassing mortal beauty.
She presently turn'd round, and fixed her large wild eyes,
Brimming with tears, upon me, fetch'd a sigh,
As from a riven heart, and cried, "He 's dead!"

HILLHOUSE.

MAUD had been so earnest and so much excited that she scarcely reflected on the singularity and novelty of her situation until she was seated, as described at the close of the last chapter. Then, indeed, she began to think that she had embarked in an undertaking of questionable prudence, and to wonder in what manner she was to be useful. Still, her heart did not fail her, or her hopes altogether sink. She saw that Nick was grave and occupied, like a man who intended to effect his purpose at every hazard;

and that purpose she firmly believed was the liberation of Robert Willoughby.

As for Nick, the instant his companion was seated, and he had got a position to his mind, he set about his business with great assiduity. It has been said that the lean-to, like the cabin, was built of logs—a fact that constituted the security of the prisoner. The logs of the lean-to, however, were much smaller than those of the body of the house, and both were of the common white pine of the country, a wood of durable qualities, used as it was here, but which yielded easily to edged tools. Nick had a small saw, a large chisel, and his knife. With the chisel he cautiously commenced opening a hole of communication with the interior by removing a little of the mortar that filled the interstices between the logs. This occupied but a moment. When effected, Nick applied an eye to the hole and took a look within. He muttered the word "good!" then withdrew his own eye, and by a sign invited Maud to apply one of hers. This our heroine did, and saw Robert Willoughby reading within a few feet of her with a calmness

of air that at once announced his utter ignorance of the dire event that had so lately occurred, almost within reach of his arm.

"Squaw speak," whispered Nick; "voice sweet as wren—go to major's ear like song of bird. Squaw speak music to young warrior."

Maud drew back, her heart beat violently, her breathing became difficult, and the blood rushed to her temples. But an earnest motion from Nick reminded her this was no time for hesitation, and she applied her mouth to the hole.

"Robert—*dear* Robert," she said, in a loud whisper, "we are here—have come to release you."

Maud's impatience could wait no longer; but her eye immediately succeeded her mouth. That she was heard was evident from the circumstance that the book fell from the major's hand, in a way to show how completely he was taken by surprise. "He knows even my whispers," thought Maud, her heart beating still more violently, as she observed the young soldier gazing around him with a bewildered air, like one who fancied he had heard the whisperings of some ministering angel.

By this time Nick had removed a long piece of the mortar; and he too was looking into the buttery. By way of bringing matters to an understanding, the Indian thrust the chisel through the opening, and moving it, he soon attracted Willoughby's attention. The latter instantly advanced, and applied his own eye to the wide crack, catching a view of the swarthy face of Nick.

Willoughby knew that the presence of this Indian, at such a place, and under such circumstances, indicated the necessity of caution. He did not speak, therefore, but, first making a significant gesture towards the door of his narrow prison, thus intimating the close proximity of sentinels, he demanded the object of this visit in a whisper.

"Come to set major free," answered Nick.

"Can I trust you, Tuscarora? Sometimes you seem a friend, sometimes an enemy. I know that you appear to be on good terms with my captors."

"Dat good—Injin know how to look two way —warrior *must*, if great warrior."

"I wish I had some proof, Nick, that you are dealing with me in good faith."

"Call *dat* proof, den!" growled the savage, seizing Maud's little hand, and passing it through the opening, before the startled girl was fully aware of what he meant to do.

Willoughby knew the hand at a glance. He would have recognised it in that forest solitude by its symmetry and whiteness, its delicacy and its fulness; but one of the taper fingers wore a ring that, of late, Maud had much used, being a diamond hoop that she had learned was a favourite ornament of her real mother's. It is not surprising, therefore, that he seized the pledge that was thus strangely held forth, and had covered it with kisses before Maud had presence of mind sufficient, or strength to reclaim it. This she would not do, however, at such a moment without returning all the proofs of ardent affection that were lavished on her own hand, by giving a gentle pressure to the one in which it was clasped.

"This is so strange, Maud!—so every way extraordinary, that I know not what to think," the

young man whispered, soon as he could get a glimpse of the face of the sweet girl. "Why are you here, beloved, and in such company?"

"You will trust *me*, Bob—Nick comes as your friend. Aid him all you can, now, and be silent. When free, then will be the time to learn all."

A sign of assent succeeded, and the major withdrew a step, in order to ascertain the course Nick meant to pursue. By this time the Indian was at work with his knife, and he soon passed the chisel in to the prisoner, who seized it, and commenced cutting into the logs at a point opposite to that where the Tuscarora was whittling away the wood. The object was to introduce the saw, and it required some labour to effect such a purpose. By dint of application, however, and by cutting the log above as well as that below, sufficient space was obtained in the course of a few minutes. Nick then passed the saw in through the opening, it exceeding his skill to use such a tool with readiness.

By this time Willoughby was engaged with the earnestness and zeal of the captive who

catches a glimpse of liberty. Notwithstanding, he proceeded intelligently and with caution. The blanket given him by his captors, as a pallet, was hanging from a nail, and he took the precaution to draw this nail, and to place it above the spot selected for the cut, that he might suspend the blanket so as to conceal what he was at, in the event of a visit from without. When all was ready, and the blanket was properly placed, he began to make long heavy strokes with the tool, in a way to deaden the sound. This was a delicate operation, but the work's being done behind the blanket had some effect in lessening the noise. As the work proceeded Willoughby's hopes increased; and he was soon delighted to hear from Nick that it was time to insert the saw in another place. Success is apt to induce carelessness; and as the task proceeded Willoughby's arm worked with greater rapidity, until a noise at the door gave the startling information that he was about to be visited. There was just time to finish the last cut, and to let the blanket fall before the door opened. The sawdust and chips had all been carefully removed as the work

proceeded, and of these none were left to betray the secret.

There might have been a quarter of a minute between the moment when Willoughby seated himself, with his book in his hand, and that in which the door opened. Short as was this interval it sufficed for Nick to remove the piece of log last cut, and to take away the handle of the saw; the latter change permitting the blanket to hang so close against the logs as completely to conceal the hole. The sentinel who appeared was an Indian in externals, but a dull, white countryman in fact and character.

"I thought I heard the sound of a saw, major," he said listlessly; "yet everything looks quiet and in its place here!"

"Where should I get such a tool?" Willoughby coolly replied; "and what is there here to saw?"

"'Twas as nat'ral, too, as the carpenter himself could make it, in sound!"

"Possibly the mill has been set in motion by some of your idlers, and you have heard the

large saw, which at a distance may sound like a smaller one near by.

The man looked incredulously at his prisoner for a moment; then he drew to the door with the air of one who was determined to assure himself of the truth, calling aloud, as he did so, to one of his companions to join him. Willoughby knew that no time was to be lost. In half a minute he had passed the hole, dropped the blanket before it, had circled the slender waist of Maud with one arm, and was shoving aside the bushes with the other, as he followed Nick from the straitened passage between the lean-to and the rock. The major seemed more bent on bearing Maud from the spot than on saving himself. Her feet scarcely touched the ground as he ascended to the place where Joyce had halted. Here Nick stood an instant, with a finger raised in intense listening. His practised ears caught the sound of voices in the lean-to, then scarce fifty feet distant. Men called to each other by name, and then a voice directly beneath them proclaimed that a head was already thrust through the hole.

"Here is your saw, and here is its workmanship!" exclaimed this voice.

"And here is blood, too," said another. "See! the ground has been a pool beneath those stones."

Maud shuddered, as if the soul were leaving its earthly tenement, and Willoughby signed impatiently for Nick to proceed. But the savage for a brief instant seemed bewildered. The danger below, however, increased, and evidently drew so near that he turned, and glided up the ascent. Presently the fugitives reached the descending path, that diverged from the larger one they were on, and by which Nick and Maud had so recently come diagonally up this cliff. Nick leaped into it, and then the intervening bushes concealed their persons from any who might continue on the upward course. There was an open space, however, a little lower down; and the quick-witted savage came to a stand under a close cover, believing flight to be useless should their pursuers actually follow on their heels.

The halt had not been made half-a-dozen seconds, when the voices of the party ascending in

chase were heard above the fugitives. Willoughby felt an impulse to dash down the path, bearing Maud in his arms, but Nick interposed his own body to so rash a movement. There was not time for a discussion, and the sounds of voices, speaking English too distinctly to pass for any but those of men of English birth, or English origin, were heard disputing about the course to be taken, at the point of junction between the two paths.

"Go by the lower," called out one from the rear; "he will run down the stream, and make for the settlements on the Hudson. Once before he has done this, as I know from Strides himself."

"D—n Strides!" answered another, more in front. "He is a snivelling scoundrel, who loves liberty as a hog loves corn, for the sake of good living. I say go the *upper*, which will carry him on the heights, and bring him out near his father's garrison."

"Here are marks of feet on the upper," observed a third, "though they seem to be coming *down*, instead of going *up* the hill."

"It is the trail of the fellows who have helped him to escape. Push *up* the hill, and we shall

have them all in ten minutes. Push *up!* push *up!*"

This decided the matter. It appeared to Willoughby that at least a dozen men ran up the path above his head, eager in the pursuit, and anticipating success. Nick waited no longer, but glided down the cliff, and was soon in the broad path which led along the margin of the stream, and was the ordinary thoroughfare in going to or from the Knoll. Here the fugitives, as on the advance, were exposed to the danger of accidental meetings; but, fortunately, no one was met or seen, and the bridge was passed in safety. Turning short to the north, Nick plunged into the woods again, following the cow-path by which he had so recently descended to the glen. No pause was made even here. Willoughby had an arm round the waist of Maud, and bore her forward with a rapidity to which her own strength was altogether unequal. In less than ten minutes from the time the prisoner had escaped, the fugitives reached the level of the rock of the waterfall, or that of the plain of the Dam. As it was reasonably certain that none of the invaders

had passed to that side of the valley, haste was no longer necessary, and Maud was permitted to pause for breath.

The halt was short, however, our heroine herself now feeling as if the major could not be secure until he was fairly within the palisades. In vain did Willoughby try to pacify her fears, and to assure her of his comparative safety; Maud's nerves were excited, and then she had the dreadful tidings, which still remained to be told, pressing upon her spirits, and quickening all her natural impulses and sentiments..

Nick soon made the signal to proceed, and then the three began to circle the flats, as mentioned in the advance of Maud and her companion. When they reached a favourable spot the Indian once more directed a halt, intimating his own intention to move to the margin of the woods, in order to reconnoitre. Both his companions heard this announcement with satisfaction; for Willoughby was eager to say to Maud directly that which he had so plainly indicated by means of the box, and to extort from her a confession that she was not offended; while

Maud herself felt the necessity of letting the major know the melancholy circumstance that yet remained to be told. With these widely distinct feelings uppermost, our two lovers saw Nick quit them, each impatient, restless, and uneasy.

Willoughby had found a seat for Maud on a log, and he now placed himself at her side, and took her hand, pressing it silently to his heart.

"Nick has, then, been a true man, dearest Maud," he said, "notwithstanding all my doubts and misgivings of him."

"Yes; he gave me to understand you would hardly trust him, and that was the reason I was induced to accompany him. We both thought, Bob, you would confide in *me*!"

"Bless you! bless you! beloved Maud! But have you seen Mike?—has *he* had any interview with you?—in a word, did he deliver you my box?"

Maud's feelings had been so much excited, that the declaration of Willoughby's love, precious as it was to her heart, failed to produce the outward signs that are usually exhibited by the delicate and sensitive of her sex when they

listen to the insinuating language for the first time. Her thoughts were engrossed with her dreadful secret, and with the best and least shocking means of breaking it to the major. The tint on her check, therefore, scarce deepened as this question was put to her, while her eye, full of earnest tenderness, still remained riveted on the face of her companion.

"I have seen Mike, dear Bob," she answered, with a steadiness that had its rise in her singleness of purpose, "and he *has* shown me, *given* me the box."

"But have you understood me, Maud? You will remember that box contained the great secret of my life!"

"This I well remember—yes, the box contains the great secret of your life."

"But—you cannot have understood me, Maud—else would you not look so unconcerned—so vacantly — I am not understood, and am miserable!"

"No, no, no," interrupted Maud hurriedly, "I understand *all* you have wished to say, and

you have no cause to be—" Maud's voice became choked, for she recollected the force of the blow that she had in reserve.

"This is so strange, altogether so unlike your usual manner, Maud, that there must be some mistake. The box contained nothing but your own hair, dearest."

"Yes; nothing else. It was *my* hair; I knew it the instant I saw it."

"And did it tell you no secret? Why was Beulah's hair not with it? Why did I cherish *your* hair, Maud, and yours alone? You have not understood me!"

"I have, dear, dear Bob! You love me; you wished to say we are not brother and sister, in truth; that we have an affection that is far stronger—one that will bind us together for life. Do not look so wretched, Bob; I understand everything you wish to say."

"This is so very extraordinary!—so unlike yourself, Maud, I know not what to make of it! I sent you that box, beloved one, to say that you had my whole heart; that I thought of you day and night; that you were the great object of my

existence; and that, while misery would be certain without you, felicity would be just as certain with you; in a word, that I love you, Maud, and can never love another."

"Yes, so I understood you, Bob."—Maud, spite of her concentration of feeling on the dreadful secret, could not refrain from blushing—"It was too plain to be mistaken."

"And how was my declaration received? Tell me at once, dear girl, with your usual truth of character and frankness—*can* you, *will* you love me in return?"

This was a home question, and on another occasion it might have produced a scene of embarrassment and hesitation; but Maud was delighted with the idea that it was in her power to break the violence of the blow she was about to inflict, by setting Robert Willoughby's mind at ease on this great point.

"I *do* love you, Bob," she said, with fervent affection beaming in every lineament of her angel face; "*have* loved you for years—how could it be otherwise? I have scarce seen any other to love; and how see you, and refrain?"

"Blessed, blessed Maud!—but this is so strange—I fear you do not understand me—I am not speaking of such affection as Beulah bears me, as brother and sister feel; I speak of the love that my mother bore my father, of the love of man and wife—"

A groan from Maud stopped the vehement young man, who received his companion in his arms as she bowed her head on his bosom, half fainting.

"Is this resentment, dearest, or is it consent?" he asked, bewildered by all that passed.

"Oh! Bob—Father—father—father!"

"My father!—what of him, Maud? Why has the allusion to him brought you to this state?"

"They have killed him, dearest, dearest Bob; and you must now be father, husband, brother, son, all in one. We have no one left but you."

A long pause succeeded. The shock was terrible to Robert Willoughby, but he bore up against it like a man. Maud's incoherent and unnatural manner was now explained, and while

unutterable tenderness of manner, a tenderness that was increased by what had just passed, was exhibited by each to the other, no more was said of love. A common grief appeared to bind their hearts closer together, but it was unnecessary to dwell on their mutual affection in words. Robert Willoughby's sorrow mingled with that of Maud, and as he folded her to his heart their faces were literally bathed in each other's tears.

It was some time before Willoughby could ask, or Maud give an explanation. Then the latter briefly recounted all she knew, her companion listening with the closest attention. The son thought the occurrence as extraordinary as it was afflicting, but there was not leisure for inquiry.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for our lovers that Nick's employment kept him away. For nearly ten minutes longer did he continue absent; then he returned, slowly, thoughtful, and possibly a little disturbed. At the sound of his footstep Willoughby released Maud from his arms, and both assumed an air of as much tranquillity as the state of their feelings would allow.

"Better march," said Nick, in his sententious manner; "Mohawk very mad."

"Do you see the signs of this?" asked the major, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Alway make Injin mad, lose scalp. Prisoner run away, carry scalp with him."

"I rather think, Nick, you do my captors injustice; so far from desiring anything so cruel, they treated me well enough, considering the circumstances, and that we are in the woods."

"Yes; spare scalp, 'cause t'ink rope ready. Nebber trust Mohawk—all bad Injin."

To own the truth, one of the great failings of the savages of the American forests was, to think of the neighbouring tribes as the Englishman is known to think of the Frenchman, and *vice versâ*; as the German thinks of both; and all think of the Yankee. In a word, his own tribe contains everything that is excellent, with the Pawnee, the Osage and Pottawattomie, as Paris contains all that is perfect in the eyes of the *bourgeois*, — London in those of the Cockney, — and America in those of its own enlightened citizens; while the hostile commu-

nities are remorselessly given up to the tender solicitude of those beings which lead nations, as well as individuals, into the sinks of perdition. Thus Nick, liberalised as his mind had comparatively become by intercourse with the whites, still retained enough of the impressions of childhood to put the worst construction on the acts of all his competitors, and the best on his own. In this spirit, then, he warned his companions against placing any reliance on the mercy of the Mohawks.

Major Willoughby, however, had now sufficient inducements to move, without reference to the hostile intentions of his late captors. That his escape would excite a malignant desire for vengeance he could easily believe; but his mother, his revered, heart-broken mother, and the patient, afflicted Beulah, were constantly before him, and gladly did he press on, Maud leaning on his arm, the instant Nick led the way. To say that the lovely confiding being, who clung to his side as the vine inclines to the tree, was forgotten, or that he did not retain a vivid recollection of all that she had so ingenuously avowed in

his favour, would not be rigidly accurate, though the hopes thus created shone in the distance, under the present causes of grief, as the sun's rays illumine the depths of the heavens, while his immediate face is entirely hidden by an eclipse.

"Did you see any signs of a movement against the house, Nick?" demanded the major, when the three had been busily making their way for several minutes round the margin of the forest.

The Tuscarora turned, nodded his head, and glanced at Maud.

"Speak frankly, Wyandotté—"

"Good!" interrupted the Indian with emphasis, assuming a dignity of manner the major had never before witnessed. "Wyandotté come—Nick gone away altogeder. Nebber see Sassy Nick ag'in at Dam."

"I am glad to hear this, Tuscarora, and, as Maud says, you may speak plainly."

"T'ink, den, best be ready. Mohawk feel worse dan if he lose ten, t'ree, six scalp. Injin know Injin feelin'. Pale-face can't stop red-skin when blood get up."

"Press on, then, Wyandotté, for the sake of God! — let me at least die in defence of my beloved mother!"

"Moder; good! Doctor Tuscarora when death grin in face. She *my* moder too!"

This was said energetically, and in a manner to assure his listeners that they had a firm ally in this warlike savage. Little did either dream at that instant that this same wayward being, the creature of passion, and the fierce avenger of all his own fancied griefs, was the cause of the dreadful blow that had so recently fallen on them.

The sun still wanted an hour of setting when Nick brought his companions to the fallen tree by which they were again to cross the rivulet. Here he paused, pointing to the roofs of the Hut, which were then just visible through the trees, as much as to say, that his duty as a guide was done.

"Thank you, Wyandotté," said Willoughby; "if it be the will of God to carry us safely through the crisis, you shall be well rewarded for this service."

"Wyandotté chief—want no dollar. Been

Injin runner—now be Injin warrior. Major follow—squaw follow—Mohawk in hurry."

This was enough. Nick passed out of the forest on a swift walk—but for the female, it would have been his customary loping trot—followed by Willoughby; his arm again circling the waist of Maud, whom he bore along, scarce permitting her light form to touch the earth. At this instant four or five conches sounded, in the direction of the mills, and along the western margin of the meadows. Blast seemed to echo blast; then the infernal yell, known as the war-whoop, was heard all along the opposite face of the buildings. Judging from the sounds, the meadows were alive with assailants pressing on for the palisades.

At this appalling moment Joyce appeared on the ridge of the roof, shouting in a voice that might have been heard to the farthest point in the valley—

"Stand to your arms, my men!" he cried: "here the scoundrels come; hold your fire until they attempt to cross the stockade."

To own the truth, there was a little bravado

in this, mingled with the stern courage that habit and nature had both contributed to lend the sergeant. The veteran knew the feebleness of his garrison, and fancied that warlike cries from himself might counterbalance the yells that were now rising from all the fields in front of the house.

As for Nick and the major they pressed forward, too earnest and excited to speak. The former measured the distance by his ear, and thought there was still time to gain a cover, if no moment was lost. To reach the foot of the cliff took just a minute; to ascend to the hole in the palisade half as much time, and to pass it a quarter. Maud was dragged ahead, as much as she ran, and the period when the three were passing swiftly round to the gate was pregnant with imminent risk. They were seen, and fifty rifles were discharged, as it might be, at a command. The bullets pattered against the logs of the Hut, and against the palisades, but no one was hurt. The voice of Willoughby opened the gate, and the next instant the three were within the shelter of the court.

CHAPTER IX.

They have not perish'd—no!
Kind words, remembered voices, once so sweet,
Smiles, radiant long ago,
And features, the great soul's apparent seat;

All shall come back, each tie
Of pure affection shall be knit again;
Alone shall evil die,
And sorrow dwell a prisoner in thy reign.

And then shall I behold
Him, by whose kind paternal side I sprung,
And her who, still and cold,
Fills the next grave, the beautiful and young!

BRYANT'S PAST.

THE scene that followed passed like a hurricane sweeping over the valley. Joyce had remained on the ridge of the roof, animating his little garrison, and endeavouring to intimidate his enemies, to the last moment. The volley of bullets

had reached the palisades and the buildings, and he was still unharmed. But the sound of the major's voice below, and the cry that Miss Maud and Nick were at the gate, produced a sudden change in all his dispositions for the defence. The sergeant ran below himself, to report and receive his orders from the new commander, while all the negroes, females as well as males, rushed down into the court to meet their young master and mistress.

It is not easy to describe the minute that succeeded, after Willoughby and Maud were surrounded by the blacks. The delight of these untutored beings was in proportion to their recent sorrow. The death of their master, and the captivity of Master Bob and Miss Maud had appeared to them like a general downfall of the family of Willoughby, but here was a revival of its hopes, that came as unexpectedly as its previous calamities. Amid the clamour, cries, tears, lamentations, and bursts of uncontrollable delight Joyce could scarce find a moment in which to discharge his duty.

"I see how it is, sergeant," exclaimed Willoughby; "the assault is now making, and you desire orders."

"There is not an instant to lose, Major Willoughby; the enemy are at the palisades already, and there is no one at his station but Jamie and young Blodget."

"To your posts, men! to your posts, everybody. The house shall be made good at all hazards. For God's sake, Joyce, give me arms. I feel that my father's wrongs are to be revenged."

"Robert! dear, dear Robert!" said Maud, throwing her arms on his shoulders, "this is no moment for such bitter feelings. Defend us, as I know you will, but defend us like a Christian."

One kiss was all that the time allowed, and Maud rushed into the house to seek her mother and Beulah, feeling as if the tidings of Bob's return might prove some little alleviation to the dreadful blow under which they must be suffering.

As for Willoughby, he had no time for pious efforts at consolation. The Hut was to be made good against a host of enemies; and the cracking

of rifles from the staging and the fields, announced that the conflict had begun in earnest. Joyce handed him a rifle, and together they ascended rapidly to the roofs. Here they found Jamie Allen and Blodget, loading and firing as fast as they could, and were soon joined by all the negroes. Seven men were now collected on the staging; and placing three in front and two on each wing, the major's dispositions were made, moving himself incessantly to whatever point circumstances called. Mike, who knew little of the use of fire-arms, was stationed at the gate as porter and warder.

It was so unusual a thing for savages to attack by daylight, unless they could resort to surprise, that the assailants were themselves a little confused. The assault was made under a sudden feeling of resentment at the escape of the prisoner, and contrary to the wishes of the principal white men in the party, though the latter were dragged in the train of events, and had to seem to countenance that of which they really disapproved. These sudden outbreakings were sufficiently common in Indian warfare, and often produced me-

morable disasters. On the present occasion, however, the most that could occur was a repulse, and to this the leaders, demagogues who owed their authority to the excesses and necessities of the times, were fain to submit, should it happen.

The onset had been fierce, and too unguarded. The moment the volley was fired at the major the assailants broke cover, and the fields were alive with men. This was the instant when the defence was left to Allen and Blodget, else might the exposure have cost the enemy dear. As it was, the last brought down one of the boldest of the Indians, while the mason fired with good will, though with less visible effect. The yell that followed this demonstration of the apparent force of the garrison was a wild mixture of anger and exultation, and the rush at the palisades was general and swift. As Willoughby posted his reinforcement the stockade was alive with men, some ascending, some firing from its summit, some aiding others to climb, and one falling within the enclosure, a second victim to Blodget's unerring aim.

The volley that now came from the roofs stag-

gered the savages, most of whom fell outward, and sought cover in their usual quick and dexterous manner. Three or four, however, thought it safer to fall within the palisades, seeking safety immediately under the sides of the buildings. The view of these men, who were perfectly safe from the fire of the garrison so long as the latter made no sortie, gave an idea to those without, and produced what had hitherto been wanting, something like order and concert in the attack. The firing now became desultory and watchful on both sides, the attacking party keeping themselves covered by the trees and fences as well as they could, while the garrison only peered above the ridge of the roof, as occasions required.

The instant the outbreak occurred, all the *ci-devant* dependants of Captain Willoughby who had deserted, abandoned their various occupations in the woods and fields, collecting in and around the cabins, in the midst of their wives and children. Joel alone was not to be seen. He had sought his friends among the leaders of the party, behind a stack of hay, at a respectful distance from the house, and to which there was a

safe approach by means of the rivulet and its fringe of bushes. The little council that was held at this spot took place just as the half-dozen assailants who had fallen within the palisades were seen clustering along under the walls of the buildings.

"Natur' gives you a hint how to conduct," observed Joel, pointing out this circumstance to his principal companions as they all lay peering over the upper portions of the stack, at the Hut. "You see them men under the eaves—they 're a plaguy sight safer up there than we be down here; and, if 'twere'n't for the look of the thing, I wish I was with 'em. That house will never be taken without a desperate sight of fightin'; for the captain is an old warrior, and seems to like to snuff gunpowder,"—the reader will understand none knew of the veteran's death but those in the house,—"and won't be for givin' up while he has a charge left. If I had twenty men—no, thirty would be better, where these fellows be, I think the place could be carried in a few minutes, and then liberty would get its rights, and your monarchy-men would be put down as they all desarve."

"What do then?" demanded the leading Mohawk, in his abrupt guttural English. "No shoot—can't kill log."

"No, chief, that 's reasonable, an' ongainsayable, too; but only one-half the inner gate is hung, and I 've contrived matters so on purpose, that the props of the half that isn't on the hinges can be undone, all the same as onlatching the door. If I only had the right man here, now, the business should be done, and that speedily."

"Go 'self," answered the Mohawk, not without an expression of distrust and contempt.

"Every man to his callin', chief. My trade is peace, and politics, and liberty, while yours is war. Howsever, I can put you, and them that likes fightin', on the trail, and then we 'll see how matters can be done. Mortality! How them desperate devils on the roof do keep blazin' away! It wouldn't surprise me if they shot somebody, or get hurt themselves."

Such were the deliberations of Joel Strides on a battle. The Indian leaders, however, gave some of their ordinary signals to bring their

"young men" more under command, and, sending messengers with orders in different directions, they left the haystack, compelling Joel to accompany them.

The results of these movements were soon apparent. The most daring of the Mohawks made their way into the rivulet, north of the buildings, and were soon at the foot of the cliff. A little reconnoitering told them that the hole which Joel had pointed out had not been closed since the entrance of Willoughby and his companions. Led by their chief, the warriors stole up the ascent, and began to crawl through the same inlet which had served as an outlet to so many deserters the previous night, accompanied by their wives and children.

The Indians in front had been ordered to occupy the attention of the garrison while this movement was in the course of execution. At a signal they raised a yell, unmasked them, fired one volley, and seemed to make another rush at the works. This was the instant chosen for the passage of the hole, and the seven leading savages effected their entrance within the stockade with

safety. The eighth man was shot by Blodget in the hole itself. The body was instantly withdrawn by the legs, and all in the rear fell back under the cover of the cliff.

Willoughby now understood the character of the assault. Stationing Joyce, with a party to command the hole, he went himself into the library, accompanied by Jamie and Blodget, using a necessary degree of caution. Fortunately the windows were raised, and a sudden volley routed all the Indians who had taken shelter beneath the rocks. These men, however, fled no further than the rivulet, where they rallied under cover of the bushes, keeping up a dropping fire at the windows. For several minutes the combat was confined to this spot; Willoughby, by often shifting from window to window along the rear of the house, getting several volleys that told, at the men under the cover.

As yet all the loss had been on the side of the assailants, though several of the garrison, including both Willoughby and Joyce, had divers exceedingly narrow escapes. Quite a dozen of the assailants had suffered, though only four were

killed outright. By this time the assault had lasted an hour, and the shades of evening were closing around the place. Daniel, the miller, had been sent by Joel to spring the mine they had prepared together, but, making the mistake usual with the uninitiated, he had hung back, to let others pass the hole first, and was consequently carried down in the crowd, within the cover of the bushes of the rivulet.

Willoughby had a short consultation with Joyce, and then he set seriously about the preparations necessary for a night defence. By a little management, and some personal risk, the bullet-proof shutters of the north wing of the Hut were all closed, rendering the rear of the buildings virtually impregnable. When this was done, and the gates of the area were surely shut, the place was like a ship in a gale, under short canvass and hove-to. The enemy within the palisades were powerless, to all appearance the walls of stone preventing anything like an application of fire. Of the last, however, there was a little danger on the roof, the Indians frequently using arrows for this purpose, and water was

placed on the staging in readiness to be used on occasion.

All these preparations occupied some time, and it was quite dark ere they were completed. Then Willoughby had a moment for reflection; the firing having entirely ceased, and nothing further remaining to do.

"We are safe for the present, Joyce," the major observed, as he and the sergeant stood together on the staging, after having consulted on the present aspect of things; "and I have a solemn duty yet to perform—my dear mother—and the body of my father!"

"Yes, sir; I would not speak of either so long as it was your honour's pleasure to remain silent on the subject. Madam Willoughby is sorely cut down, as you may imagine, sir; and as for my gallant old commander, he died in his harness, as a soldier should."

"Where have you taken the body?—has my mother seen it?"

"Lord bless you, sir, Madam Willoughby had his honour carried into her own room, and there she and Miss Beulah"—so all of the Hut

still called the wife of Evert Beekman—" she and Miss Beulah, kneel, and pray, and weep, as you know, sir, ladies will, whenever anything severe comes over their feelings. God bless them both, we all say, and think, ay, and pray, too, in our turns, sir."

" Very well, Joyce. Even a soldier may drop a tear over the dead body of his own father. God only knows what this night will bring forth, and I may never have a moment as favourable as this for discharging so solemn a duty."

" Yes, your honour"—Joyce fancied that the major had succeeded to this appellation by the decease of the captain—" yes, your honour, the commandments, that the Rev. Mr. Woods used to read to us of a Sunday, tell us all about that; and it is quite as much the duty of a Christian to mind the commandments, I do suppose, as it is for a soldier to obey orders. God bless you, sir, and carry you safe through the affair. I had a touch of it with Miss Maud, myself, and know what it is. It 's bad enough to lose an old commander in so sudden a way like, without having to *feel* what has happened in company

with so sweet ladies as these we have in the house. As for these blackguards down inside the works, let them give you no uneasiness; it will be light work for us to keep them busy, compared to what your honour has to do."

It would seem by the saddened manner in which Willoughby moved away that he was of the same way of thinking as the sergeant on this melancholy subject. The moment, however, was favourable for the object, and delay could not be afforded. Then Willoughby's disposition was to console his mother, even while he wept with her over the dead body of him they had lost.

Notwithstanding the wild uproar that had so prevailed, not only without, but within the place, the portion of the house that was occupied by the widowed matron and her daughters was silent as the grave. All the domestics were either on the staging or at the loops, leaving the kitchens and offices deserted. The major first entered a little ante-chamber, that opened between a store-room and the apartment usually occupied by his mother; this being the ordinary means of approach to her room. Here he paused, and listened quite

a minute, in the hope of catching some sound from within that might prepare him for the scene he was to meet. Not a whisper, a moan, or a sob could be heard; and he ventured to tap lightly at the door. This was unheeded; waiting another minute, as much in dread as in respect, he raised the latch with some such awe as one would enter into a tomb of some beloved one. A single lamp let him into the secrets of this solemn place.

In the centre of the room lay stretched, on a large table, the manly form of the author of his being. The face was uppermost, and the limbs had been laid in decent order, as is usual with the dead that have been cared for. No change had been made in the dress, however, the captain lying in the hunting shirt in which he had sallied forth; the crimson tint which disfigured one breast having been sedulously concealed by the attention of Great Smash. The passage from life to eternity had been so sudden as to leave the usual benignant expression on the countenance of the corpse; the paleness which had succeeded the fresh ruddy tint of nature alone denoting that

the sleep was not a sweet repose, but that of death.

The body of his father was the first object that met the gaze of the major. He advanced, leaned forward, kissed the marble-like forehead with reverence, and groaned in the effort to suppress an unmanly outbreaking of sorrow. Then he turned to seek the other well-beloved faces. There sat Beulah, in a corner of the room, as if to seek shelter for her infant, folding that infant to her heart, keeping her look riveted in anguish on the inanimate form that she had ever loved beyond a daughter's love. Even the presence of her brother scarce drew a glance away from the sad spectacle; though, when it at length did, the youthful matron bowed her face down to that of her child and wept convulsively. She was nearest to the major, who moved to her side, and kissed the back of her neck with kind affection. The meaning was understood; and Beulah, while unable to look up, extended a hand to meet the fraternal pressure it received.

Maud was near, kneeling at the side of the bed. Her whole attitude denoted the abstraction

of a mind absorbed in worship and solicitation. Though Willoughby's heart yearned to raise her in his arms, to console her, and bid her lean on himself, in future, for her earthly support, he too much respected her present occupation, to break in upon it with any irreverent zeal of his own. His eye turned from this loved object, therefore, and hurriedly looked for his mother.

The form of Mrs. Willoughby had escaped the first glances of her son in consequence of the position in which she had placed herself. The stricken wife was in a corner of the room, her person partly concealed by the drapery of a window-curtain; though this was evidently more the effect of accident than of design. Willoughby started as he caught the first glance of his beloved parent's face, and he felt a chill pass over his whole frame. There she sat upright, motionless, tearless, without any of the alleviating weaknesses of a less withering grief, her mild countenance exposed to the light of the lamp, and her eyes riveted on the face of the dead. In this posture had she remained for hours; no tender cares on the part of her daughters, no attentions from her

domestics, no outbreaking of her own sorrows producing any change. Even the clamour of the assault had passed by her like the idle wind.

"My mother! my poor, dear, heart-broken mother!" burst from Willoughby, at this sight, and he stepped quickly forward, and knelt at her feet.

But Bob, the darling Bob, his mother's pride and joy, was unheeded. The heart which had so long beaten for others only, which never seemed to feel a wish or a pulsation but in the service of the objects of its affection, was not sufficiently firm to withstand the blow that had lighted on it so suddenly! Enough of life remained, however, to support the frame for a while; and the will still exercised its power over the mere animal functions. Her son shut out the view of the body, and she motioned him aside with an impatience of manner he had never before witnessed from the same quarter. Inexpressibly shocked, the major took her hands by gentle compulsion, covering them with kisses, and literally bathing them in tears.

"Oh! mother—dearest, dearest mother!" he

cried, "*will* you not—*do* you not know *me?* Robert—Bob—your much-indulged, grateful, affectionate son? If father is gone into the immediate presence of the God he revered and served, I am still left to be a support to your declining years. Lean on me, mother, next to your Father in heaven."

"Will he ever get up, Robert?" whispered the widowed mother. "You speak too loud, and may rouse him before his time. He promised me to bring you back; and he ever kept his promises. He had a long march, and is weary. See, how sweetly he sleeps!"

Robert Willoughby bowed his head to his mother's knees, and groaned aloud. When he raised his face again he saw the arms of Maud elevated towards heaven, as if she would pluck down that consolation for her mother that her spirit was so fervently asking of the Almighty. Then he gazed into the face of his mother again, hoping to catch a gleam of some expression and recognition that denoted more of reason. It was in vain; the usual placidity, the usual mild affection were there, but both were blended with

the unnatural halo of a mind excited to disease, if not to madness. A slight exclamation, which sounded like alarm, came from Beulah; and, turning towards his sister, Willoughby saw that she was clasping Evert still closer to her bosom, with her eyes now bent on the door. Looking in the direction of the latter, he perceived that Nick had stealthily entered the room.

The unexpected appearance of Wyandotté might well alarm the youthful mother. He had applied his war-paint since entering the Hut; and this, though it indicated an intention to fight in defence of the house, left a picture of startling aspect. There was nothing hostile intended by this visit, however. Nick had come not only in amity, but in a kind concern to see after the females of the family, who had ever stood high in his friendship, notwithstanding the tremendous blow he had struck against their happiness. But he had been accustomed to see those close distinctions drawn between individuals and colours; and, the other proprieties admitted, would not have hesitated about consoling the widow with the offer of his own hand. Major Willoughby

understanding, from the manner of the Indian, the object of his visit, suffered him to pursue his own course, in the hope it might rouse his mother to a better consciousness of objects around her.

Nick walked calmly up to the table, and gazed at the face of his victim with a coldness that proved he felt no compunction. Still he hesitated about touching the body, actually raising his hand as if with that intent, and then withdrawing it, like one stung by conscience. Willoughby noted the act, and, for the first time, a shadowy suspicion glanced on his mind. Maud had told him all she knew of the manner of his father's death, and old distrusts began to revive, though so faintly as to produce no immediate results.

As for the Indian, the hesitating gesture excepted, the strictest scrutiny or the keenest suspicion could have detected no signs of feeling. The senseless form before him was not less moved than he appeared to be, so far as the human eye could penetrate. Wyandotté *was* unmoved. He believed that, in curing the sores on his own back in this particular manner he had

done what became a Tuscarora warrior and a chief. Let not the self-styled Christians of civilized society affect horror at this instance of savage justice, so long as they go the whole length of the law of their several communities in avenging their own fancied wrongs, using the dagger of calumny instead of the scalping-knife, and rending and tearing *their* victims by the agency of gold and power, like so many beasts of the field, in all the forms and modes that legal vindictiveness will either justify or tolerate, often exceeding those broad limits, indeed, and seeking impunity behind perjuries and frauds.

Nick's examination of the body was neither hurried nor agitated. When it was over, he turned calmly to consider the daughters of the deceased.

"Why you cry?—why you 'fear'd?" he said, approaching Beulah, and placing his swarthy hand on the head of her sleeping infant. "Good squaw—good pappoose. Wyandotté take care 'em in woods. Bye'm-by go to pale-face town, and sleep quiet."

This was rudely said, but it was well meant.

Beulah so received it, and she endeavoured to smile her gratitude in the face of the very being from whom, more than from all of earth, she would have turned in horror, could her mental vision have reached the fearful secret that lay buried in his own bosom. The Indian understood her look, and making a gesture of encouragement, he moved to the side of the woman whom his own hand had made a widow.

The appearance of Wyandotté produced no change in the look or manner of the matron. The Indian took her hand, and spoke.

"Squaw *berry* good," he said with emphasis. "Why look so sorry—cap'in gone to happy huntin'-ground of his people. All good dere—chief time come, *must* go."

The widow knew the voice, and by some secret association it recalled the scenes of the past, producing a momentary revival of her faculties.

"Nick, *you* are my friend," she said earnestly. "Go speak to him, and see if *you* can wake him up."

The Indian fairly started as he heard this strange proposal. The weakness lasted only for

a moment, however, and he became as stoical, in appearance at least, as before.

"No," he said; "squaw quit cap'in now. Warrior go on last path all alone, no want companion. She look at grave now and den and be happy."

"Happy!" echoed the widow, "what is *that*, Nick?—what is *happy*, my son? It seems a dream—I *must* have known what it was; but I forget it all now. Oh! it was cruel, cruel, cruel, to stab a husband and a father; wasn't it, Robert? What say you, Nick; shall I give you more medicine? You'll die, Indian, unless you take it. Mind what a Christian woman tells you, and be obedient. Here, let me hold the cup—there! now you'll live!"

Nick recoiled an entire step, and gazed at the still beautiful victim of his ruthless revenge in a manner no one had ever before noted in his mien. His mixed habits left him in ignorance of no shade of the fearful picture before his eyes, and he began better to comprehend the effects of the blow he had so hastily struck; a blow meditated for years, though given at length under a sudden and

vehement impulse. The widowed mother, however, was past noting these changes.

"No, no, no, Nick," she added hurriedly, scarce speaking above a whisper, "do not awake him! God will do that when he summons his blessed ones to the foot of his throne. Let us all lie down, and sleep with him. Robert, do you lie there at his side, my noble, noble boy; Beulah, place little Evert and yourself at the other side; Maud, your place is by the head; I will sleep at his feet; while Nick shall watch, and let us know when it will be time to rise and pray."

The general and intense, almost spell-bound, attention with which all in the room listened to these gentle but touching wanderings of a mind so single and pure, was interrupted by yells so infernal, and shrieks so wild and fearful, that it seemed, in sooth, as if the last trump had sounded, and men were passing forth from their graves to judgment. Willoughby almost leaped out of the room, and Maud followed, to shut and bolt the door, when her waist was encircled by the arm of Nick, and she found herself borne forward towards the din.

CHAPTER X.

O Time and Death! with certain pace,
Though still unequal, hurrying on,
O'erturning, in your awful race,
The cot, the palace, and the throne!

SANDS.

MAUD had little leisure for reflection. The yells and shrieks were followed by the cries of combatants and the crack of the rifle. Nick hurried her along at a rate so rapid that she had not breath to question or remonstrate, until she found herself at the door of a small store-room, in which her mother was accustomed to keep articles of domestic economy that required but little space. Into this room Nick thrust her, and then she heard the key turn on her egress. For a single moment Wyandotté stood hesitating whether he should endeavour to get Mrs. Willoughby and her other

daughter into the same place of security; then, judging of the futility of the attempt by the approach of the sounds within, among which he heard the full, manly voice of Robert Willoughby, calling on the garrison to be firm, he raised an answering yell to those of the Mohawks, the war-whoop of his tribe, and plunged into the fray with the desperation of one who ran a muck, and with the delight of a demon.

In order to understand the cause of this sudden change, it will be necessary to return a little, in the order of time. While Willoughby was with his mother and sisters, Mike had charge of the gate. The rest of the garrison was either at the loops or were stationed on the roofs. As the darkness increased Joel mustered sufficient courage to crawl through the hole, and actually reached the gate. Without him it was found impossible to spring his mine, and he had been prevailed on to risk this much, on condition it should not be asked of him to do such violence to his feelings as to enter the court of a house in which he had seen so many happy days.

The arrangement by which this traitor intend-

ed to throw a family upon the tender mercies of savages, was exceedingly simple. It will be remembered that only one leaf of the inner gate was hung, the other being put in its place, where it was sustained by a prop. This prop consisted of a single piece of timber, of which one end rested on the ground and the other on the centre of the gate; the last being effectually prevented from slipping by pins of wood, driven into the massy woodwork of the gate above its end. The lower end of the prop rested against a fragment of rock that nature had placed at this particular spot. As the work had been set up in a hurry, it was found necessary to place wedges between the lower end of the prop and the rock in order to force the leaf properly into its groove, without which it might have been canted to one side, and of course easily overturned by the exercise of sufficient force from without.

To all this arrangement Joel had been a party, and he knew, as a matter of course, its strong and its weak points. Seizing a favourable moment, he had loosened the wedges, leaving them in their places, however, but using the precaution to fas-

ten a bit of small but strong cord to the most material one of the three, which cord he buried in the dirt, and led half round a stick driven into the earth, quite near the wall, and thence through a hole made by one of the hinges, to the outer side of the leaf. The whole had been done with so much care as to escape the vigilance of casual observers, and expressly that the overseer might assist his friends in entering the place, after he himself had provided for his own safety by flight. The circumstance that no one trod on the side of the gateway where the unhung leaf stood, prevented the half-buried cord from being disturbed by any casual footstep.

As soon as Joel reached the wall of the Hut his first care was to ascertain if he were safe from missiles from the loops. Assured of this fact, he stole round to the gate, and had a consultation with the Mohawk chief on the subject of springing the mine. The cord was found in its place; and, hauling on it gently, Joel was soon certain that he had removed the wedge, and that force might speedily throw down the unhung leaf. Still he proceeded with caution. Applying the

point of a lever to the bottom of the leaf, he hove it back sufficiently to be sure it would pass inside of its fellow, and then he announced to the grave warrior, who had watched the whole proceeding, that the time was come to lend his aid.

There were a dozen reckless whites in the cluster of savages collected at the gate; and enough of these were placed at handspikes to effect the intended dislodgement. The plan was this: while poles were set against the upper portion of the leaf, to force it within the line of the suspended part, handspikes and crowbars, of which a sufficiency had been provided by Joel's forethought, were to be applied between the hinge edge and the wall to cast the whole over to the other side.

Unluckily, Mike had been left at the gate as the sentinel. A more unfortunate selection could not have been made, the true-hearted fellow having so much self-confidence, and so little forethought, as to believe the gates impregnable. He had lighted a pipe, and was smoking as tranquilly as he had ever done before, in his daily indulgences of this character, when the unhung

leaf came tumbling in upon the side where he sat, nothing saving his head but the upper edge's lodging against the wall. At the same moment a dozen Indians leaped through the opening, and sprang into the court, raising the yells already described. Mike followed, armed with his shillelah, for his musket was abandoned in the surprise, and he began to lay about him with an earnestness that in nowise lessened the clamour. This was the moment when Joyce, nobly sustained by Blodget and Jamie Allen, poured a volley into the court from the roofs; when the fray became general. To this point had the combat reached when Willoughby rushed into the open air, followed, a few instants later, by Nick.

The scene that succeeded is not easily described. It was a *mêlée* in the dark, illuminated at instants by the flashes of guns, and rendered horrible by shrieks, curses, groans, and whoops. Mike actually cleared the centre of the court, where he was soon joined by Willoughby, when, together, they made a rush at a door, and actually succeeded in gaining their own party on the roof. It was not in nature for the young soldier

to remain here, however, while his mother, Beulah, and, so far as he knew, Maud, lay exposed to the savages below. Amid a shower of bullets he collected his whole force, and was on the point of charging into the court, when the roll of a drum without brought everything to a stand. Young Blodget, who had displayed the ardour of a hero and the coolness of a veteran throughout the short fray, sprang down the stairs unarmed at this sound, passed through the astonished crowd in the court unnoticed, and rushed to the outer gate. He had barely time to unbar it, when a body of troops marched through, led by a tall, manly-looking chief, who was accompanied by one that the young man instantly recognized, in spite of the darkness, for Mr. Woods in his surplice. At the next moment the strangers had entered with military steadiness into the court, to the number of at least fifty, ranging themselves in order across its area.

"In the name of Heaven, who are you?" called out Willoughby from a window. "Speak at once, or we fire."

"I am Colonel Beekman, at the head of a regular force," was the answer; "and if, as I suspect, you are Major Willoughby, you know you are safe. In the name of Congress, I command all good citizens to keep the peace, or they will meet with punishment for their contumacy."

This announcement ended the war, Beekman and Willoughby grasping each other's hands fervently at the next instant.

"Oh, Beekman!" exclaimed the last, "at what a moment has God sent you hither! Heaven be praised! notwithstanding all that has happened, you will find your wife and child safe. Place sentinels at both gates, for treachery has been at work here, and I shall ask for rigid justice."

"Softly, softly, my good fellow," answered Beekman pressing his hand. "Your own position is a little delicate, and we must proceed with moderation. I learned, just in time, that a party was coming hither bent on mischief; and, obtaining the necessary authority, I hastened to the nearest garrison, obtained a company, and commenced my march as soon as possible. Had

we not met with Mr. Woods, travelling for the settlements in quest of succour, we might have been too late. As it was, God be praised! I think we have arrived in season."

Such were the facts. The Indians had repelled the zealous chaplain as a madman, compelling him to take the route toward the settlements, however, their respect for this unfortunate class of beings rendering them averse to his rejoining their enemies. He could, and did impart enough to Beekman to quicken his march, and to bring him and his followers up to the gate at a time when a minute might have cost the entire garrison their lives.

Anxious as he was to seek Beulah and his child, Beekman had a soldier's duties to perform, and those he would not neglect. The sentinels were posted, and orders issued to light lanterns, and to make a fire in the centre of the court, so that the actual condition of the field of battle might be ascertained. A surgeon had accompanied Beekman's party, and he was already at work, so far as the darkness would allow. Many hands being employed, and combustibles easy

to be found, ere long the desired light was gleaming on the terrible spectacle.

A dozen bodies were stretched in the court, of which three or four were fated never to rise again in life; of the rest, no less than four had fallen with broken heads, inflicted by O'Hearn's shillelah. Though these blows were not fatal, they effectually put the warriors *hors de combat.* Of the garrison, not one was among the slain in this part of the field. On a later investigation, however, it was ascertained that the poor old Scotch mason had received a mortal hurt through a window, and this by the very last shot that had been fired. On turning over the dead of the assailants, too, it was discovered that Daniel the miller was of the number. A few of the Mohawks were seen with glowing eyes in corners of the court, applying their own rude dressings to their various hurts; succeeding, on the whole, in effecting the great purpose of the healing art about as well as those who were committed to the lights of science.

Surprisingly few uninjured members of the assaulting party, however, were to be found when

the lanterns appeared. Some had slipped through the gate before the sentinels were posted; others had found their way to the roof, and thence, by various means, to the ground; while a few lay concealed in the buildings until a favourable moment offered to escape. Among all those who remained, not an individual was found who claimed to be in any authority. In a word, after five minutes of examination, both Beekman and Willoughby were satisfied that there no longer existed a force to dispute with them the mastery of the Hut.

"We have delayed too long relieving the apprehensions of those who are very dear to us, Major Willoughby," Beekman at length observed. "If you will lead the way to the parts of the buildings where your—*my* mother, and wife, are to be found, I will now follow you."

"Hold, Beekman, there yet remains a melancholy tale to be told—nay, start not—I left our Beulah, and your boy, in perfect health less than a quarter of an hour since; but my honoured, honourable, revered, beloved father has been killed in a most extraordinary manner, and you

will find his widow and daughters weeping over his body."

This appalling intelligence produced a halt, during which Willoughby explained all he knew of the manner of his father's death, which was merely the little he had been enabled to glean from Maud. As soon as this duty was performed, the gentlemen proceeded together to the apartment of the mourners, each carrying a light.

Willoughby made an involuntary exclamation, when he perceived that the door of his mother's room was open. He had hoped Maud would have had the presence of mind to close and lock it; but here he found it, yawning as if to invite the entrance of enemies. The light within, too, was extinguished, though, by the aid of the lanterns, he saw large traces of blood in the anteroom, and the passages he was obliged to thread. All this hastened his steps. Presently he stood in the chamber of death.

Short as had been the struggle, the thirst for scalps had led some of the savages to this sanctuary. The instant the Indians had gained the court some of the most ferocious of their number

had rushed into the building, penetrating its recesses in a way to defile them with slaughter. The first object that Willoughby saw was one of these ruthless warriors, stretched on the floor, with a living Indian, bleeding at half a dozen wounds, standing over him; the eyeballs of the latter were glaring like the tiger's that is suddenly confronted to a foe. An involuntary motion was made towards the rifle he carried, by the major; but the next look told him that the living Indian was Nick. Then it was that he gazed more steadily about him, and took in all the horrible truths of that fatal chamber.

Mrs. Willoughby was seated in the chair where she had last been seen, perfectly dead. No mark of violence was ever found on her body, however, and there is no doubt that her constant spirit had followed that of her husband to the other world, in submission to the blow which had separated them. Beulah had been shot; not, as was afterwards ascertained, by any intentional aim, but by one of those random bullets of which so many had been flying through the buildings. The missile had passed through her heart, and she lay press-

ing the little Evert to her bosom, with that air of steady and unerring affection which had marked every act of her innocent and feeling life. The boy himself, thanks to the tiger-like gallantry of Nick, had escaped unhurt. The Tuscarora had seen a party of six take the direction of this chamber, and he followed with an instinct of their intentions. When the leader entered the room, and found three dead bodies, he raised a yell that betokened his delight at the prospect of gaining so many scalps; at the next instant, while his fingers were actually entwined in the hair of captain Willoughby, he fell by a blow from Wyandotté. Nick next extinguished the lamp, and then succeeded a scene, which none of the actors themselves could have described. Another Mohawk fell, and the remainder, after suffering horribly from the keen knife of Nick, as well as from blows received from each other, dragged themselves away, leaving the field to the Tuscarora. The latter met the almost bewildered gaze of the major with a smile of grim triumph, as he pointed to the three bodies of the beloved ones and said—

" See !— all got scalp ! Deat' nothin'— scalp ebbery t'ing."

We shall not attempt to describe the outbreaking of anguish from the husband and brother. It was a moment of wild grief that bore down all the usual restraints of manhood, though it was such a moment as an American frontier residence has often witnessed. The quiet but deep-feeling nature of Beekman received a shock that almost produced a dissolution of his earthly being. He succeeded, however, in raising the still warm body of Beulah from the floor, and folding it to his heart. Happily for his reason, a flood of tears, such as women shed, burst from his soul rather than from his eyes, bedewing her still sweet and placid countenance.

To say that Robert Willoughby did not feel the desolation which so suddenly alighted on a family that had often been quoted for its mutual affection and happiness, would be to do him great injustice : he even staggered under the blow,—yet his heart craved further information. The Indian was gazing intently on the sight of Beekman's grief, partly in wonder, but more in

sympathy, when he felt an iron pressure of his arm.

"Maud — Tuscarora," the major rather groaned than whispered in his ear, "know you anything of Maud?"

Nick made a gesture of assent; then motioned for the other to follow. He led the way to the store-room, produced the key, and throwing open the door, Maud was weeping on Robert Willoughby's bosom in another instant. He would not take her to the chamber of death, but urged her, by gentle violence, to follow him to the library.

"God be praised for this mercy!" exclaimed the ardent girl, raising her hands and streaming eyes to heaven. "I know not, care not, who is conqueror, since *you* are safe!"

"Oh! Maud, beloved one, we must now be all in all to each other. Death has stricken the others."

This was a sudden and involuntary announcement, though it was best it should be so under the circumstances. It was long before Maud could hear an outline even of the details, but

she bore them better than Willoughby could have hoped; the excitement had been so high as to brace the mind to meet any human evil. The sorrow that came afterwards, though sweetened by so many tender recollections and chastened hopes, was deep and enduring.

Our picture would not have been complete without relating the catastrophe that befel the Hutted Knoll; but, having discharged this painful duty, we prefer to draw a veil over the remainder of that dreadful night. The cries of the negresses, when they learned the death of their old and young mistress, disturbed the silence of the place for a few minutes, and then a profound stillness settled on the buildings, marking them distinctly as the house of mourning. On further inquiry, too, it was ascertained that Great Smash, after shooting an Oneida, had been slain and scalped. Pliny the younger also fell fighting like a wild beast, to defend the entrance to his mistresses' apartments.

The following day, when light had returned, a more accurate idea was obtained of the real state of the valley. All of the invading party, the

dead and wounded excepted, had made a rapid retreat, accompanied by most of the deserters and their families. The name, known influence, and actual authority of Colonel Beekman had wrought this change; the irregular powers that had set the expedition in motion preferring to conceal their agency in the transaction rather than make any hazardous attempt to claim the reward of patriotic service, as is so often done in revolutions, for merciless deeds and selfish acts. There had been no real design on the part of the whites to injure any of the family in their persons; but, instigated by Joel, they had fancied the occasion favourable for illustrating their own public virtue, while they placed themselves in the way of receiving fortune's favours. The assault that actually occurred was one of those uncontrollable outbreakings of Indian ferocity that have so often set at defiance the restraints of discipline.

Nick was not to be found either. He had been last seen dressing his wounds, with Indian patience, and Indian skill, preparing to apply herbs and roots, in quest of which he went into the

forest about midnight. As he did not return, Willoughby feared that he might be suffering alone, and determined to have a search made as soon as he had performed the last sad offices for the dead.

Two days occurred, however, before this melancholy duty was discharged. The bodies of all the savages who had fallen were interred the morning after the assault; but that of Jamie Allen, with those of the principal persons of the family, were kept for the pious purposes of affection until the time mentioned.

The funeral was a touching sight. The captain, his wife, and daughter, were laid side by side near the chapel; the first and last of their race that ever reposed in the wilds of America. Mr. Woods read the funeral service, summoning all his spiritual powers to sustain him as he discharged this solemn office of the Church. Willoughby's arm was around the waist of Maud, who endeavoured to reward his tender assiduities by a smile, but could not. Colonel Beekman held little Evert in his arms, and stood over the grave with the countenance of a resolute

man stricken with grief,—one of the most touching spectacles of our nature.

"*I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord,*" sounded in the stillness of that valley like a voice from heaven, pouring out consolation on the bruised spirits of the mourners. Maud raised her face from Willoughby's shoulder, and lifted her blue eyes to the cloudless vault above her, soliciting mercy, and offering resignation in the look. The line of troops in the back-ground moved, as by a common impulse, and then a breathless silence showed the desire of these rude beings not to lose a syllable.

A round red spot formed on each of the cheeks of Mr. Woods as he proceeded, and his voice gathered strength, until its lowest intonations came clear and distinct on every ear. Just as the bodies were about to be lowered into their two receptacles, the captain, his wife and daughter being laid in the same grave, Nick came with his noiseless step near the little group of mourners. He had issued from the forest only a few minutes before, and understanding the intention of the ceremony, he approached the spot

as fast as weakness and wounds would allow. Even he listened with profound attention to the chaplain, never changing his eye from his face, unless to glance at the coffins as they lay in their final resting-place.

"*I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, write, From henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours,*" continued the chaplain, his voice beginning to betray a tremor; then the gaze of the Tuscarora became keen as the panther's glance at his discovered victim. Tears followed, and, for a moment, the voice was choked.

"Why you woman?" demanded Nick fiercely. "Save all 'e scalp!"

This strange interruption failed to produce any effect. First Beekman yielded; Maud and Willoughby followed; until Mr. Woods himself, unable to resist the double assaults of the power of sympathy and his own affection, closed the book and wept like a child.

It required minutes for the mourners to recover their self-command. When the latter re-

turned, however, all knelt on the grass, the line of soldiers included, and the closing prayers were raised to the throne of God.

This act of devotion enabled the mourners to maintain an appearance of greater tranquillity until the graves were filled. The troops advanced, and fired three volleys over the captain's grave, when all retired towards the Hut. Maud had caught little Evert from the arms of his father, and pressing him to her bosom, the motherless babe seemed disposed to slumber there. In this manner she walked away, attended closely by the father, who now cherished his boy as an only treasure.

Willoughby lingered the last at the grave, Nick alone remaining near him. The Indian had been struck by the exhibition of deep sorrow that he had witnessed, and he felt an uneasiness that was a little unaccountable to himself. It was one of the caprices of this strange nature of ours, that he should feel a desire to console those whom he had so deeply injured himself. He drew near to Robert Willoughby, therefore, and, laying a hand on the latter's arm, drew his look

in the direction of his own red and speaking face.

"Why so sorry, major?" he said. "Warrior nebber die but once—*must* die sometime."

"There lie my father, my mother, and my only sister, Indian—is not that enough to make the stoutest heart bend? You knew them, too Nick,—did you ever know better?"

"Squaw good—both squaw good—Nick see no pale-face squaw he like so much."

"I thank you, Nick! This rude tribute to the virtues of my mother and sister is far more grateful to me than the calculating and regulated condolence of the world."

"No squaw *so* good as old one—she all heart—love everybody but self."

This was so characteristic of his mother, that Willoughby was startled by the sagacity of the savage, though reflection told him so long an acquaintance with the family must have made a dog familiar with this beautiful trait in his mother.

"And my father, Nick!" exclaimed the major, with feeling,—"my noble, just, liberal, gallant

father! He, too, you knew well, and must have loved."

"No so good as squaw," answered the Tuscarora sententiously, and not altogether without disgust in his manner.

"We are seldom as good as our wives, and mothers, and sisters, Nick, else should we be angels on earth. But, allowing for the infirmities of us men, my father was just and good."

"Too much flog," answered the savage sternly, "make Injin's back sore."

This extraordinary speech struck the major less at the time than it did years afterwards, when he came to reflect on all the events and dialogues of this teeming week. Such was also the case as to what followed.

"You are no flatterer, Tuscarora, as I have always found in our intercourse. If my father ever punished you with severity, you will allow *me*, at least, to imagine it was merited."

"Too much flog, I say," interrupted the savage fiercely. "No difference, chief or not. Touch ole sore too rough. Good some, bad some. Like weather—now shine, now storm."

"This is no time to discuss these points, Nick. You have fought nobly for us, and I thank you. Without your aid, these beloved ones would have been mutilated, as well as slain; and Maud! my own blessed Maud! might now have been sleeping at their sides."

Nick's face was now all softness again, and he returned the pressure of Willoughby's hand with honest fervour. Here they separated. The major hastened to the side of Maud, to fold her to his heart and console her with his love. Nick passed into the forest, returning no more to the Hut. His path led him near the grave. On the side where lay the body of Mrs. Willoughby he threw a flower he had plucked in the meadow; while he shook his finger menacingly at the other, which hid the person of his enemy. In this he was true to his nature, which taught him never to forget a favour, or forgive an injury.

CHAPTER XI.

"I shall go on through all eternity;
Thank God, I only am an embryo still:
The small beginning of a glorious soul,
An atom that shall fill immensity.

COXE.

A FORTNIGHT elapsed ere Willoughby and his party could tear themselves from a scene that had witnessed so much domestic happiness; but on which had fallen the blight of death. During that time the future arrangements of the survivors were completed. Beckman was made acquainted with the state of feeling that existed between his brother-in-law and Maud, and he advised an immediate union.

"Be happy while you can," he said, with bitter emphasis. "We live in troubled times, and heaven knows when we shall see better. Maud has not a blood-relation in all America, unless

there may happen to be some in the British army. Though we should all be happy to protect and cherish the dear girl, she herself would probably prefer to be near those whom nature has appointed her friends. To me she will always seem a sister, as you must ever be a brother. By uniting yourselves at once, all appearances of impropriety will be avoided; and in time, God averting evil, you can introduce your wife to her English connections."

"You forget, Beekman, that you are giving this advice to one who is a prisoner on parole, and one who may possibly be treated as a spy."

"No; that is impossible. Schuyler, our noble commander, is both just and a gentleman. He will tolerate nothing of the sort. Your exchange can easily be effected; and, beyond your present difficulties, I can pledge myself to be able to protect you."

Willoughby was not averse to following this advice; and he urged it upon Maud as the safest and most prudent course they could pursue. Our heroine, however, was so reluctant even to assuming the appearance of happiness, so recently

after the losses she had experienced, that the lover's task of persuasion was by no means easy. Maud was totally free from affectation, while she possessed the keenest sense of womanly propriety. Her intercourse with Robert Willoughby had been of the tenderest and most confidential nature, above every pretence of concealment, and was rendered sacred by the scenes through which they had passed. Her love, her passionate, engrossing attachment she did not scruple to avow; but she could not become a bride while the stains of blood seemed so recent on the very hearth around which they were sitting. She still saw the forms of the dead in their customary places, heard their laughs, the tones of their affectionate voices, the maternal whisper, the playful, paternal reproof, or Beulah's gentle call.

"Yet, Robert," said Maud, for she could now call him by that name, and drop the desperate familiarity of "Bob," — "yet, Robert, there would be a melancholy satisfaction in making our vows at the altar of the little chapel, where we have so often worshipped together — the

loved ones who are gone, and we who alone remain."

"True, dearest Maud; and there is another reason why we should quit this place only as man and wife. Beekman has owned that a question will probably be raised among the authorities at Albany concerning the nature of my visit here. It might relieve him from an appeal to more influence than would be altogether pleasant, did I appear as a bridegroom rather than as a spy."

The word "spy" settled the matter. All ordinary considerations were lost sight of under the apprehensions it created, and Maud frankly consented to become a wife that very day. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Woods accordingly, and the little chapel witnessed tears of bitter recollections mingling with the smiles with which the bride received the warm embrace of her husband, after the benediction was pronounced. Still all felt that, under the circumstances, delay would have been unwise. Maud saw a species of holy solemnity in a ceremony so closely connected with scenes so sad.

A day or two after the marriage all that remained of those who had so lately crowded the Hut left the valley together. The valuables were packed and transported to boats lying in the stream below the mills. All the cattle, hogs, &c., were collected and driven towards the settlements; and horses were prepared for Maud and the females, who were to thread the path that led to Fort Stanwix. In a word, the Knoll was to be abandoned, as a spot unfit to be occupied in such a war. None but labourers, indeed, could, or would remain, and Beekman thought it wisest to leave the spot entirely to nature for the few succeeding years.

There had been some rumours of confiscations by the new state, and Willoughby had come to the conclusion that it would be safer to transfer this property to one who would be certain to escape such an infliction, than to retain it in his own hands. Little Evert was entitled to receive a portion of the captain's estate by justice, if not by law. No will had been found, and the son succeeded as heir at law. A deed was accordingly drawn up by Mr. Woods, who understood

such matters, and being duly executed, the Beaver Dam property was vested in fee in the child. His own thirty thousand pounds, the personals he inherited from his mother, and Maud's fortune, to say nothing of the major's commission, formed an ample support for the new married pair. When all was settled, and made productive, indeed, Willoughby found himself the master of between three and four thousand sterling a year, exclusively of his allowances from the British Government, an ample fortune for that day. In looking over the accounts of Maud's fortune he had reason to admire the rigid justice and free-handed liberality with which his father had managed her affairs. Every farthing of her income had been transferred to capital, a long minority nearly doubling the original investment. Unknown to himself, he had married one of the largest heiresses then to be found in the American colonies. This was unknown to Maud also; though it gave her great delight on her husband's account, when she came to learn the truth.

Albany was reached in due time, though not

without encountering the usual difficulties. Here the party separated. The remaining Plinies and Smashes were all liberated, handsome provisions made for their little wants, and good places found for them in the connection of the family to which they had originally belonged. Mike announced his determination to enter a corps that was intended expressly to fight the Indians. He had a long score to settle; and having no wife or children, he thought he might amuse himself in this way during a revolution, as well as in any other.

"If yer honour was going anywhere near the County-Leitrim," he said, in answer to Willoughby's offer to keep him near himself, "I might travel in company; seein' that a man likes to look on ould faces now and then. Many thanks for this bag of gold, which will sarve to buy scalps wid; for, divil bur-r-n me if I don't carry on *that* trade for some time to come. T'ree cuts wid a knife, half-a-dozen pokes in the side, and a bullet scraping the head, makes a man mindful of what has happened; to say nothing of the captain, and Madam Willoughby, and Miss Beuly—God for ever bless and presarve 'em all t'ree! and, if there

was such a thing as a bit of a church in this country, wouldn't I use this gould for masses?—*dat* I would, and let the scalps go to the divil!"

This was an epitome of the views of Michael O'Hearn. No arguments of Willoughby's could change his resolution; but he set forth, determined to illustrate his career by procuring as many Indian scalps, as an atonement for the wrongs done "Madam Willoughby and Miss Beuly," as came within his reach.

"And you, Joyce," said the major, in an interview he had with the sergeant, shortly after reaching Albany; "I trust *we* are not to part. Thanks to Colonel Beekman's influence and zeal, I am already exchanged, and shall repair to New York next week. You are a soldier; and these are times in which a *good* soldier is of some account. I think I can safely promise you a commission in one of the new provincial regiments about to be raised."

"I thank your honour, but do not feel at liberty to accept the offer. I took service with Captain Willoughby for life; had he lived, I would have followed wherever he led; but that

enlistment has expired, and I am now like a recruit before he takes the bounty. In such cases a man has always a right to pick his corps. Politics I do not much understand; but when the question comes up of pulling a trigger *for* or *against* his country, an *unengaged* man has a right to choose. Between the two, meaning no reproach to yourself, Major Willoughby, who had regularly taken service with the other side before the war began; but, between the two, I would rather fight an Englishman than an American."

"You may possibly be right, Joyce; though, as you say, my service is taken. I hope you follow the dictates of conscience, as I am certain I do myself. We shall never meet in arms, however, if I can prevent it. There is a negotiation for a lieutenant-colonelcy going on, which, if it succeed, will carry me to England. I shall never serve an hour longer against these colonies if it be in my power to avoid it."

"*States*, with your permission, Major Willoughby," answered the sergeant a little stiffly. "I am glad to hear it, sir; for, though I wish my enemies good soldiers, I would rather not have the

son of my old captain among them. Colonel Beekman has offered to make me sergeant-major of his own regiment; and we both of us join next week."

Joyce was as good as his word. He became sergeant-major, and, in the end, lieutenant and adjutant of the regiment he had mentioned. He fought in most of the principal battles of the war, and retired at the peace with an excellent character. Ten years later he fell in one of the murderous Indian affairs that occurred during the first presidential term, a grey-headed captain of foot. The manner of his death was not to be regretted, perhaps, as it was what he had always wished might happen; but it was a singular fact that Mike stood over his body, and protected it from mutilation; the County-Leitrim man having turned soldier by trade, re-enlisting regularly as soon as at liberty, and laying up scalps on all suitable occasions.

Blodget, too, had followed Joyce to the wars. The readiness and intelligence of this young man, united to a courage of proof, soon brought him forward, and he actually came out of

the revolution a captain. His mind, manners, and information advanced with himself; he ended his career not many years since, a prominent politician in one of the new states; a general in the militia—no great preferment, by the way, for one who had been a corporal at the Hut, and a legislator. Worse men have often acted in all these capacities among us; and it was said, with truth, at the funeral of General Blodget—an accident that does not always occur on such occasions,—that "another revolutionary hero is gone." Beekman was never seen to smile from the moment he first beheld the dead body of Beulah lying with little Evert in her arms. He served faithfully until near the close of the war, falling in battle only a few months previously to the peace. His boy preceded him to the grave, leaving, as confiscations had gone out of fashion by that time, his uncle heir-at-law again to the same property that he had conferred on himself.

As for Willoughby and Maud, they were safely conveyed to New York, where the former rejoined his regiment. Our heroine here met her great-uncle, General Meredith, the first of

her own blood relations whom she had seen since infancy. Her reception was grateful to her feelings; and there being a resemblance in years, appearance, and manners, she transferred much of that affection which she had thought interred for ever in the grave of her reputed father, to this revered relative. He became much attached to his lovely niece himself, and ten years later Willoughby found his income quite doubled by his decease.

At the expiration of six months the Gazette that arrived from England announced the promotion of "Sir Robert Willoughby, Bart., late major in the —th, to be lieutenant-colonel, by purchase, in His Majesty's —th regiment of foot." This enabled Willoughby to quit America; to which quarter of the world he had no occasion to be sent during the remainder of the war.

Of that war itself there is little occasion to speak. Its progress and termination have long been matters of history. The independence of America was acknowledged by England in 1783; and immediately after, the republicans commenced the

conquest of their wide-spread domains, by means of the arts of peace. In 1785 the first great assaults were made on the wilderness, in that mountainous region which has been the principal scene of our tale. The Indians had been driven off, in a great measure, by the events of the revolution, and the owners of estates granted under the Crown began to search for their lands in the untenanted woods. Such isolated families too as had taken refuge in the settlements now began to return to their deserted possessions; and soon the smokes of clearings were obscuring the sun. Whitestown, Utica, on the site of old Fort Stanwix, Cooperstown, for years the seat of justice for several thousand square miles of territory, all sprang into existence between the years 1785 and 1790. Such places as Oxford, Binghamton, Norwich, Sherburne, Hamilton, and twenty more, that now dot the region of which we have been writing, did not then exist even in name; for in that day the appellation and maps came after the place; whereas, now the former precede the last.

The ten years that elapsed between 1785 and 1795 did wonders for all this mountain district.

More favourable lands lay spread in the great west, but the want of roads, and remoteness from the markets, prevented their occupation. For several years, therefore, the current of emigration which started out of the eastern states the instant peace was proclaimed, poured its tide into the counties mentioned in our opening chapter — *counties* as they are to-day; *county* ay, and fragment of a county too, as they were then.

The New York Gazette, a journal that frequently related facts that actually occurred, announced in its number of June 11th, 1795, "His Majesty's Packet that has just arrived," —it required half a century to teach the journalists of this country the propriety of saying "His *Britannic* Majesty's Packet," instead of "His Majesty's," a bit of good taste, and of good sense that many of them have yet to learn, — "has brought *out*,"—*home* would have been better,— "among her passengers, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Willoughby, and his lady, both of whom are natives of this state. We welcome them back to their land of nativity, where we can assure them they will be cordially received, notwithstand-

ing old quarrels. *Major* Willoughby's kindness to American prisoners is gratefully remembered ; nor is it forgotten that he desired to exchange to another regiment in order to avoid further service in this country."

It will be conceded, this was a very respectable puff for the year 1795, when something like moderation, truth, and propriety were observed upon such occasions. The effect was to bring the English general's name into the mouths of the whole state ; a baronet causing a greater sensation then in America than a duke would produce to-day. It had the effect, however, of bringing around General Willoughby many of his father's, and his own old friends, and he was as well received in New York twelve years after the termination of the conflict as if he had fought on the other side. The occurrence of the French revolution, and the spread of doctrines that were termed jacobinical, early removed all the dissensions between a large portion of the whigs of America and the tories of England, on the American side of the water at least; and Providence can only tell what might

have been the consequences, had this feeling been thoroughly understood on the other.

Passing over all political questions, however, our narrative calls us to the relation of its closing scene. The visit of Sir Robert and Lady Willoughby to the land of their birth was, in part, owing to feeling, in part to a proper regard for the future provision of their children. The baronet had bought the ancient paternal estate of his family in England, and having two daughters, besides an only son, it occurred to him that the American property, called the Hutted Knoll, might prove a timely addition to the ready money he had been able to lay up from his income. Then, both he and his wife had a deep desire to revisit those scenes where they had first learned to love each other, and which still held the remains of so many who were dear to them.

The cabin of a suitable sloop was therefore engaged, and the party, consisting of Sir Robert, his wife, a man and woman servant, and a sort of American courier, engaged for the trip, embarked on the morning of the 25th of July. On the

afternoon of the 30th the sloop arrived in safety at Albany, where a carriage was hired to proceed the remainder of the way by land. The route by old Fort Stanwix, as Utica was still generally called, was taken. Our travellers reached it on the evening of the third day; the "Sands," which are now traversed in less than an hour, then occupying more than half of the first day. When at Fort Stanwix a passable country-road was found, by which the travellers journeyed until they reached a tavern that united many of the comforts of a coarse civilisation with frontier simplicity. Here they were given to understand they had only a dozen miles to go in order to reach the Knoll.

It was necessary to make the remainder of the journey on horseback. A large, untenanted estate lay between the highway and the valley, across which no public road had yet been made. Foot-paths, however abounded, and the rivulet was found without any difficulty. It was, perhaps, fortunate for the privacy of the Knoll that it lay in the line of no frequented route, and squatters being rare in that day, Willoughby saw,

the instant he struck the path that followed the sinuosities of the stream, that it had been seldom trodden in the interval of the nineteen years which had occurred since he had last seen it himself. The evidences of this fact increased as the stream was ascended, until the travellers reached the mill, when it was found that the spirit of destruction, which so widely prevails in the loose state of society that exists in all new countries, had been at work. Every one of the buildings at the falls had been burnt; probably as much because it was in the power of some reckless wanderer to work mischief, as for any other reason. That the act was the result of some momentary impulse was evident in the circumstance that the mischief went no further. Some of the machinery had been carried away, however, to be set up in other places, on a principle that is very widely extended through all border settlements, which considers the temporary disuse of property as its virtual abandonment.

It was a moment of pain and pleasure, strangely mingled, when Willoughby and Maud reached the rocks, and got a first view of the ancient

Beaver Dam. All the buildings remained, surprisingly little altered to the eye by the lapse of years. The gates had been secured when they left the place in 1776; and the Hut, having no accessible external windows, that dwelling remained positively intact. It is true, quite half the palisadoes were rotted down, but the Hut itself had resisted the ravages of time. A fire had been kindled against its side, but the stone walls had opposed an obstacle to its ravages; and an attempt, by throwing a brand upon the roof, had failed of its object, the shingles not igniting. On examination, the lock of the inner gate was still secure. The key had been found, and, on its application, an entrance was obtained into the court.

What a moment was that when Maud, fresh from the luxuries of an English home, entered this long and well-remembered scene of her youth! Rank grasses were growing in the court, but they soon disappeared before the scythes that had been brought, in expectation of the circumstance. Then all was clear for an examination of the house. The Hut was exactly in the con-

dition in which it had been left, with the exception of a little, and a very little, dust collected by time.

Maud was still in the bloom of womanhood, feminine, beautiful, full of feeling, and as sincere as when she left these woods, though her feelings were tempered a little by intercourse with the world. She went from room to room, hanging on Willoughby's arm, forbidding any to follow. All the common furniture had been left in the house, in expectation it would be inhabited again ere many years, and this helped to preserve the identity. The library was almost entire; the bedrooms, the parlours, and even the painting-room, were found very much as they would have appeared after an absence of a few months. Tears flowed in streams down the cheeks of Lady Willoughby as she went through room after room, and recalled to the mind of her husband the different events of which they had been the silent witnesses. Thus passed an hour or two of unutterable tenderness, blended with a species of holy sorrow. At the end of that time the attendants, of whom many had been engaged, had taken

possession of the offices, &c., and were bringing the Hut once more into a habitable condition. Soon, too, a report was brought that the mowers, who had been brought in anticipation of their services being wanted, had cut a broad swathe to the ruins of the chapel, and the graves of the family.

It was now near the setting of the sun, and the hour was favourable for the melancholy duty that remained. Forbidding any to follow, Willoughby proceeded with Maud to the graves. These had been dug within a little thicket of shrubs, planted by poor Jamie Allen, under Maud's own directions. She had then thought that the spot might one day be wanted. These bushes, lilacs, and ceringos had grown to a vast size in that rich soil. They completely concealed the space within, an area of some fifty square feet, from the observation of those without. The grass had been cut over all, however, and an opening made by the mowers gave access to the graves. On reaching this opening Willoughby started at hearing voices within the enclosure. He

was about to reprove the intruders, when Maud pressed his arm, and whispered,

"Listen, Willoughby — those voices sound strangely to my ears! We have heard them before."

"I tell ye, Nick, — ould Nicky, or Saucy Nick, or whatever 's your name," said one within in a strong Irish accent, "that Jamie, the mason that was, is forenent ye at this minute, under that bit of a sod, — and it 's his honour, and missus, and Miss Beuly that is buried here. Och! ye 're a cr'ature, Nick; good at takin' scalps; but ye knows nothin' of graves, barrin' the quhantity ye 've helped to fill."

"Good," answered the Indian. "Cap'in here; squaw here; darter here. Where son?—where t'other gal?"

"Here," answered Willoughby, leading Maud within the hedge. "I am Robert Willoughby, and this is Maud Meredith, my wife."

Mike fairly started; he even showed a disposition to seize a musket which lay on the grass. As for the Indian, a tree in the forest could not

have stood less unmoved than he was at this unexpected interruption. Then all four stood in silent admiration, noting the changes which time had, more or less, wrought in all.

Willoughby was in the pride of manhood. He had served with distinction, and his countenance and frame both showed it, though neither had suffered more than was necessary to give him a high military air, and a look of robust vigour. As for Maud, with her graceful form fully developed by her riding-habit, her soft lineaments and polished expression, no one would have thought her more than thirty, which was ten years less than her real age. With Mike and Nick it was very different. Both had grown old, not only in fact but in appearance. The Irishman was turned of sixty, and his hard, coarse-featured face, burnt as red as the sun in a fog, by exposure and Santa Cruz, was getting to be wrinkled and a little emaciated. Still his frame was robust and powerful. His attire was none of the best, and it was to be seen at a glance that it was more than half military. In point of fact, the poor fellow had been refused a reenlistment

in the army, on account of his infirmities and years, and America was not then a country to provide retreats for her veterans. Still Mike had an ample pension for wounds, and could not be said to be in want. He had suffered in the same battle with Joyce, in whose company he had actually been Corporal O'Hearn, though his gallant commander had not risen to fight again, as had been the case with the subordinate.

Wyandotté exhibited still greater changes. He had seen his threescore and ten years; and was fast falling into the "sere and yellow leaf." His hair was getting grey, and his frame, though still active and sinewy, would have yielded under the extraordinary marches he had once made. In dress, there was nothing to remark; his ordinary Indian attire being in as good condition as was usual for the man. Willoughby thought, however, that his eye was less wild than when he knew him before, and every symptom of intemperance had vanished, not only from his countenance but his person.

From the moment Willoughby appeared, a marked change came over the countenance of

Nick. His dark eye, which still retained much of its brightness, turned in the direction of the neighbouring chapel, and he seemed relieved when a rustling in the bushes announced a footstep. There had not been another word spoken when the lilacs were shoved aside, and Mr. Woods, a vigorous little man, in a green old age, entered the area. Willoughby had not seen the chaplain since they parted at Albany, and the greetings were as warm as they were unexpected.

"I have lived a sort of hermit's life, my dear Bob, since the death of your blessed parents," said the divine, clearing his eyes of tears; "now and then cheered by a precious letter from yourself and Maud—I call you both by the names I gave you both in baptism—and it was, 'I, *Maud*, take thee, *Robert*,' when you stood before the altar in that little edifice—you will pardon me if I am too familiar with a general officer and his lady—"

"Familiar!" exclaimed both in a breath;—and Maud's soft, white hand was extended towards the chaplain with reproachful earnestness—

" We, who were made Christians by you, and who have so much reason to remember and love you always !"

" Well, well ; I see that you are Robert and Maud still !" dashing streaming tears from his eyes now. " Yes, I did bring you both into God's visible church on earth, and you were baptized by one who received his ordination from the Archbishop of Canterbury himself,"—Maud smiled a little archly,—" and who has never forgotten his ordination vows, as he humbly trusts. But you are not the only Christians I have made — I now rank Nicholas among the number —"

" Nick !" interrupted Sir Robert.

" Wyandotté !" added his wife, with a more delicate tact.

" I call him Nicholas now, since he was christened by that name : there is no longer a Wyandotté, or a Saucy Nick. Major Willoughby, I have a secret to communicate — I beg pardon, Sir Robert — but you will excuse old habits—if you will walk this way."

Willoughby was apart with the chaplain a full

half-hour, during which time Maud wept over the graves, the rest standing by in respectful silence. As for Nick, a stone could scarcely have been more fixed than his attitude. Nevertheless, his mien was rebuked, his eye downcast; even his bosom was singularly convulsed. He knew that the chaplain was communicating to Willoughby the manner in which he had slain his father. At length, the gentlemen returned slowly towards the graves; the general agitated, frowning, and flushed. As for Mr. Woods, he was placid and full of hope. Willoughby had yielded to his expostulations and arguments a forgiveness, which came reluctantly, and perhaps as much for the want of a suitable object for retaliation as from a sense of Christian duty.

"Nicholas," said the chaplain, "I have told the general all."

"He know him!" cried the Indian, with startling energy.

"I do, Wyandotté; and sorry have I been to learn it. You have made my heart bitter."

Nick was terribly agitated. His youthful and former opinions maintained a fearful struggle with

those which had come late in life; the result being a wild admixture of his sense of Indian justice, and submission to the tenets of his new and imperfectly comprehended faith. For a moment the first prevailed. Advancing with a firm step to the general, he put his own bright and keen tomahawk into the other's hands, folded his arms on his bosom, bowed his head a little, and said firmly,

"Strike—Nick kill cap'in—major kill Nick."

"No, Tuscarora, no!" answered Sir Robert Willoughby, his whole soul yielding before this act of humble submission, "May God in heaven forgive the deed, as I now forgive you."

There was a wild smile gleaming on the face of the Indian; he grasped both hands of Willoughby in his own. He then muttered the words "God forgive!" his eye rolled upward at the clouds, and he fell dead on the grave of his victim. It was thought, afterwards, that agitation had accelerated the crisis of an incurable affection of the heart.

A few minutes of confusion followed. Then Mike, bare-headed, his old face flushed and angry,

dragged from his pockets a string of strange-looking, hideous objects, and laid them by the Indian's side. They were human scalps, collected by himself in the course of many campaigns, and brought as a species of hecatomb to the graves of the fallen.

"Out upon ye, Nick!" he cried; "had I known the like of that, little would I have campaigned in yer company! Och! 'twas an undacent deed, and a hundred confessions would barely wipe it from yer sowl. It 's a pity, too, that ye 've died widout absolution from a praist, sich as I 've tould ye off. Barrin' the brache of good fellieship, I could have placed yer own scalp wid the rest, as a p'ace-offering to his Honour, the Missus, and Miss Beuly—"

"Enough," interrupted Sir Robert Willoughby, with an authority of manner that Mike's military habits could not resist; "the man has repented, and is forgiven. Maud, love, it is time to quit this melancholy scene; occasions will offer to revisit it."

In the end, Mr. Woods took possession of the Hut, as a sort of hermitage, in which to spend

the remainder of his days. He had toiled hard for the conversion of Nick, in gratitude for the manner in which he had fought in defence of the females. He now felt as keen a desire to rescue the Irishman from the superstitions of what he deemed an error quite as fatal as heathenism. Mike consented to pass the remainder of his days at the Knoll, which was to be, and in time *was*, renovated, under their joint care.

Sir Robert and Lady Willoughby passed a month in the valley. Nick had been buried within the bushes; and even Maud had come to look upon this strange conjunction of graves with the eye of a Christian, blended with the tender regrets of a woman. The day that the general and his wife left the valley for ever they paid a final visit to the graves. Here Maud wept for an hour. Then her husband, passing an arm around her waist, drew her gently away, saying, as they were quitting the enclosure—

"They are in heaven, dearest—looking down in love, quite likely, on us, the objects of so much of their earthly affection. As for Wyan-

dotté, he lived according to his habits and intelligence, and happily died under the convictions of a conscience directed by the lights of divine grace. Little will the deeds of this life be remembered among those who have been the true subjects of its blessed influence. If this man were unmerciful in his revenge, he also remembered my mother's kindnesses, and bled for her and her daughters. Without his care, my life would have remained unblessed with your love, my ever-precious Maud! He never forgot a favour, or forgave an injury."

THE END.

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